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THE

ONE-EYED TRAPPER;

OR

THE MAID OF THE CLIFF

BY CAPT. COMSTOCK.

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THE ONE-EYED TRAPPER.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOUNTAIN VISION.

THE sun had not yet risen. The blue peaks of the Ozark mountains in the southern part of Missouri were veiled by a thin mist, which must vanish before the golden rays of the luminary.

Meanwhile, the birds of day were awake. The oriole sat in the laurel tree, looking eastward, the woodpecker tapped at the bark of the chestnut, and the kingfisher sailed high in the blue mist over the tree-tops.

A tall man stepped forth from the woodland lying between the mountains and the White river, and commenced scaling the rocks. He was about twenty-eight years of age, and might have been handsome but for the loss of one eye. The other, round and of a clear gray color, was singularly piercing. In fact, "RED CLAW"—such was the name by which this person was known among the Indians—could see better on a straight line with his one eye than most men with two. Again and again had this been proved on the trail and under other circumstances, the additional power of vision concentrated in the one organ seeming to more than make up for the absence of the other. This fortunate peculiarity had, on one occasion, been the means of his saving a whole regiment of regulars from being massacred, while acting as guide to them on their way to Fort Smith in the Indian Territory. A party of Indians lying in ambush, had by him been detected a mile distant, although screened by a line of bushes which completely hid them from his companions.

As a fighter with bears and Indians, his reputation was little less than that of the famous Crockett. The red-men had

often endeavored to waylay him, or lead him into ambush, that they might rid themselves of so formidable an adversary, but thus far his remarkable skill and cunning had baffled all their efforts.

The dress of this person consisted of the usual trapper costume: leather leggings, moccasins, bear-skin cap and fringed hunting-shirt; his arms, of a long knife and a rifle of remarkable caliber, which he had christened "Fire-teeth," and which, in his hands, had never missed fire.

To see the man scaling the rocks, now drawing himself up by a root along the sides of a perpendicular elevation, now gaining a footing upon a two-inch ledge, to slip from which would be certain destruction, again crawling through some narrow gorge, scarcely wide enough to admit his herculean frame, then leaping one of the numerous chasms which abound in this range, the spectator would have been reminded of the sure-footed chamois-hunter, who traverses the lofty regions of the Alps.

Tanned and reddened by the warm southern sun, the face of the man caught a deeper glow, and his eye grew brighter with the hardy, healthful exercise, which he continued until he reached a rocky platform far up on the mountains, where lay the carcass of a huge brown bear, which he had killed on the previous evening, but had concluded to defer conveying to his cabin until the present time.

The position he now occupied was about two hundred feet above the tops of the woodland trees extending along from the base of the mountains. Thus viewed, the forest-trees waving in the breeze, and partially obscured by the mist, presented the appearance of a dark mass of waters rolling along before the wind. Above, about fifty feet, extended rocky parapets, the summits of them veiled by the mist, from which, here and there, a sharp spur of rock protruded, like the lance of some huge, fabled *giant* of the mountains.

Red Claw glanced in this direction, his keen eye glittering. An ordinary man would have seen nothing save the mist and rocks, but the trapper could distinctly make out the back of a human head.

"Come hyar, Chick! Didn't you see me before?"

At the words, the boyish face of the person called Chick,

who had been sent up here to await Guy's coming, was thrust downward through the mist, and a hand beckoned to the hunter.

The latter was soon by the other's side. The boy, who was about seventeen years of age, was attired in a rather fanciful garb, which, however, became him well. He wore a loose cloak of white deer-skin, trimmed with red, and a cap of the same color and material, containing a swan's feather, secured with a silver clasp. He was a handsome young fellow, but his features and expression were unmistakably Indian. In fact, Guy Winton—such was Red Claw's real name—had found the lad when a child, lying by a stream of water in the heart of the forest, almost starved to death! What had become of his parents—or of those who should have taken care of him, the trapper had never been able to discover. He had, therefore, resolved to bring up as his own this little foundling, which, as it grew older, became much attached to him, loving him like a father.

"Hist! See!" whispered the lad, pointing toward a rocky spur about twenty feet above their heads.

Glancing thither, Guy beheld the form of an Indian girl, the incomparable beauty of which was evident in spite of the veil of mist by which it was partially obscured.

Balanced on one foot, the girl, attired in a tasteful garb of brown and red buffalo-skin, stood leaning forward in an attitude of peculiar grace, her long, thick black hair falling round her shoulders, her rounded arm thrown over her head, her glance bent straight ahead of her, as if she was on the watch.

"Beyootiful!" ejaculated Red Claw, under his breath.

The girl seemed to hear the whisper, for she started suddenly and looked downward.

The moment she saw the two watchers, she descended to the spur on the other side, and both beheld her soon vanish in the mist.

Red Claw commenced clambering toward the spur.

"Where are you going?" inquired the boy.

"Arter that beyooty! P'raps she are in need of purtection—fleein' from some pesky red-skin, which are wantin' to marry her ag'in' her will! I'll save her if I kin—*thar's me!*"

"I'll help!" exclaimed Chick, who also had been much impressed by the singular beauty of the Indian maid.

With an agility fully equal to that of the elder, he followed him up the rock. The two kept swiftly on, and finally came in sight of the girl about twenty yards ahead, fleeing with an agility which gave her more the appearance of some ethereal being than one of mortal mold. Her course lay along a ledge protruding from the side of a rocky wall, beyond which Winton knew there were deep, almost impenetrable ravines.

"Ef she keeps on," he gasped, fairly turning white with excitement, "ef she keeps on, nothin' can save her!"

The boy, behind a pace or two, clenched his white teeth together, the only exhibition of emotion he displayed.

Both, exerting themselves to the utmost, endeavored to reach the girl before she should gain the edge of the first ravine, which they deemed too wide for any female to leap over. Meanwhile they kept shouting to her to stop, but she sped on, heeding them not, at the same swift pace as before. This it was which had so excited the trapper, who, believing that the girl was not aware of the presence of the ravine, now obscured by the mist and the shadow of a rock rising near, feared that she might not discover it in time to recover her balance and prevent herself from falling into the abyss!

On she went. Soon, straight before her was the ravine, not so much veiled by the mist as Guy had thought. The fugitive must see it. Her pursuers stopped, hoping that she would then pause also.

Nothing of the kind. On she went, and now something like a hoarse shriek broke from the lips of Guy, as he beheld her within a few feet of the yawning opening.

"God help ye, Injun gal!" he shouted. "Surely you ain't a-goin' to try to jump it! Don't! *thar's you!*"

She half turned her superb neck; her eyes flashed fire and scorn—her long black hair swept the wind. Not in the hundredth degree did she slacken her pace.

A moment more, and the tip of her right foot was on the ravine, and then—

"My God! *thar she goes!*" screamed Red Claw, his one eye blazing like a star.

As a bow bent, until the two ends meet, and then let go.

shoots upward, so the Indian girl's lithe form was seen making the airy spring!

Away she went, just clearing the yawning chasm—not an inch to spare—only one foot first striking the opposite side of the perilous brink! The *impetus*, however, was sufficient to prevent her going backward; she drew up the other foot, and a moment later was lost in the mist beyond.

Guy drew a long breath.

"That war a powerful jump," he muttered. "Ef she hadn't cl'ared the chasm, I'd have cried like a baby, big as I be! Thar's no use of follerin' her up, as she are afraid of us! It's all that eye thar!" he added, mournfully, pointing toward his one orb.

Chick shook his head.

"Think she heard of you," he said; "heard you spoken of. She saw you and knew you. That's why run."

"Ef that war all, I'd soon convince her I warn't meanin' any harm to her—*thar's* me!" cried Guy, hopelessly.

As he spoke, Chick darted forward, and picked up something from the edge of the ravine.

It was a small, delicate moccasin, beautifully ornamented with red and blue, and with the strings by which it had been secured burst open by the strain upon them when the Indian girl balanced herself upon the ball of her foot, preparatory to leaping. This was the cause of its being left behind.

"Thar never war sich a purty moccasin as that before," cried Guy, pressing it to his lips.

He stood surveying it a few minutes; then, pocketing the treasure, retired, followed by Chick, to the spot where lay the carcass of the brown bear.

CHAPTER II.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

ASSISTED by Chick, Guy finally carried the carcass of the bear to the door of his cabin. This was built of logs, squarely shaped, and was situated in a small clearing in the woodland already spoken of.

The interior had no floor, but several bear-skins thrown upon the ground constituted a comfortable carpet for men bred to the hardships of a hunter's life. Upon the clay-stuffed walls were hung the horns of a buffalo, a large powder-horn, a drinking-gourd, a leather knapsack, and an old tin cup. As to furniture, there was none here, unless the stump of a broad tree, serving the purposes of a chair and table, might be thus denominated.

Seating themselves on this, the two filled their pipes, curiously carved by their own hands, from a beautiful specimen of laurel-wood, and commenced skinning the bear, with a dexterity which soon enabled them to finish their work. The skin was spread out in the sun to dry, and the meat prepared for roasting in the stone fire-place at one side of the hut.

Chick had just kindled a fire, and placed the meat over it, when a shadow darkened the entrance of the hut, into which, without ceremony, stalked a tall Indian, evidently of the Osage tribe.

He was a man of herculean proportions, and being armed with tomahawk and rifle, certainly presented a formidable appearance, lightened by the bright war-paint covering his massive jaws and forehead.

The suddenness with which this apparition came, seeming to walk right out of the mist, without having made the slightest noise to warn the hunters of his approach, added to the effect he produced upon the two in the cabin.

Red Claw, who was the first to see him, sprung for his rifle, which he had placed in a corner of the hut.

"Hello! What yer doin'? Git out! Ef yer don't I'll put a bullet through yer head—*thar's me!*"

Chick also grasped his rifle, and kept his eye on the Indian, but said not a word.

Meanwhile the new-comer, who had now come to a halt, stood surveying Guy with calm, piercing gaze.

"Come, Injun!" cried Guy, cocking his piece, "speak out and tell me the meanin' of this ongentlemanly intrusion. Your people ginerally come upon a feller in a more sneakin' fashion—*thar's them!*"

"Omeeno's tribe are tigers in the fight; but they love to strike and not let the white man see, because that makes the white man afraid!"

"Well, see hyar! ef yer come hyar to brag, I'll soon put an end to that!"

"Omeeno cares not for big talk. *He* strikes—*squaws* talk! He came for Winnihah's moccasin. The white man has it. He told Winnihah that he would get it for her, and he *will!*"

"Now, Injun, yer come to the p'int. I'm perfectly willin' Winnihah should hev the pretty moccasin, but I'd hev prefared that she should come fur it herself—*thar's her!*"

"Winnihah loves Omeeno. She came to him, fleeing like a deer, and told him of her loss. *He* gave her the moccasin, six moons ago, so he must get it back."

Guy's one eye flashed fire; there was jealousy and *fight* in its expression.

The Indian was his enemy, and he longed to close with him in combat. But one thought restrained him, and that was Winnihah, who might grieve for the Indian's death. He could not bear the idea of *her* suffering in any manner whatever.

Reflecting a moment, he again spoke.

"I tell yer what, Injun: Winnihah shall hev her moccasin, but I prefar to put it into her hands myself. Do yer know whar the White river is?"

"Does the prairie-dog know his cave, the wolf his den?"

"Very well, then! You and Winnihah must meet me by the White river, close to the place whar them three trappers

war buried a year ago, arter bein' massacred by some of your infarnal tribe—thar's *them*!"

"It is well!" answered the Indian. "Omeeno will be there with Winnihah."

"In an hour," said Guy, "I will jine ye."

"It is well."

So saying, the Indian stalked away, the trapper watching him with wistful eye. He was on fire to engage with the fellow in mortal combat; in fact, he almost experienced a feeling of self-reproach for not doing so.

However, when he took the moccasin he would ascertain if the girl loved the man, and if he found she did not, he would attack the Indian there and then.

"So that beyooty's name is Winnihah?" he muttered, when the Indian was gone. "Nothing would please me more than to make the gal my wife; and ef I kin I will."

The bear's meat soon being done, he and Chick ate heartily, after which Guy signified his intention of going to keep his appointment. He understood the Indian character too well to either go alone or without taking with him the means of performing a long tramp, which from treachery or some other cause, on the part of his red foe, might be necessary. From the wall he first took down a coil of deer-hide to serve as rope-stuff for a lasso, in case it were required, shouldered his knapsack, filled his horn with a fresh supply of powder and his pouch with good bullets, which *he* seldom wasted. Chick, who was to accompany him, made similar preparations, after which the two started toward the White river.

Instead, however, of proceeding directly to the place of appointment, they separated and taking a roundabout course, proceeded to reconnoiter.

Guy thus arrived within fifty yards of the rendezvous without discovering any sign of treachery. A thick mass of laurel and hazel bushes now were before him, screening the spot from his gaze, and suggesting caution. Moving stealthily forward, he peered through an opening in the shrubbery, when to his unbounded joy, he beheld the form of the beautiful Winnihah, standing by the stream.

Leaning against a tree, with the sunshine flooding her

beautiful hair, her position eminently graceful and bewitching, made Guy's pulses throb and bound.

Just beyond the stream was a mass of rugged rocks, rising about thirty feet, the summit covered with a thin growth of shrubbery, and commanding a good view of a deep gully to the left, bounded with a few chestnut trees and a mass of clambering vines. Glancing toward the rock, as he moved on, Guy thought he could make out something glistening a moment in the shrubbery. He paused, intently watching the rock, when suddenly proceeding therefrom, he heard the harsh notes apparently of a raven, which he at once recognized as made by Chick.

Yes, Chick then was there, and it was the barrel of his rifle that Guy had seen glistening through the brushwood.

The boy had taken a roundabout way, crossed the stream above and thus got to the rock, whence it was evident he saw something suspicious, as was indicated by the raven croak.

Moving forward a little further, the latter came in sight of a figure seated upon a log in a bent position, the head partially concealed by bushes, a few yards from where Winnihah was stationed. The buffalo-skin garb and a portion of the legs of this figure were visible, but the rest was obscured by shadow and shrubbery.

"Thar's the Injun!" mentally exclaimed the trapper, and he hev kept his word—thar's *him*, and I don't understand the meanin' of that croak from Chick."

He continued to move forward, still gazing keenly toward the two figures near the stream. Surely every thing was right in that direction. There was Winnihah, and there was the Indian figure still seated on the log.

Wondering still more why Chick had uttered the notes of caution, Guy kept on; then paused again, to see if the boy would repeat the croak.

Watching the rock, he presently detected the gleam of something white, which he soon discovered to be Chick's handkerchief, evidently wound round his hand to attract his (Guy's) attention.

The arm was pointed in the direction of the gully, a few minutes, and then withdrawn, convincing Guy that the suspicious point was in that direction. Determined to investigate

the matter, the trapper now turning and still keeping himself screened by the shrubbery moved along toward the gully. He was soon near enough to obtain a good view of the place, but he could see nothing there to excite his suspicions. The bottom of the hollow was covered with a sparse growth of shrubbery and mosses of long, waving grass, and a small rivulet there went rippling along over a bed of sand and gravel. Not far from the edge of the hollow, was a tree which evidently had been blown over by a high wind, and which, seen at a distance, bore some resemblance to a human figure. This it was, perhaps, which had deceived Chick, whom, in the course of his experience with the boy, Guy had known to have been, on several occasions, mistaken in a similar manner.

Concluding thus the trapper turned, and rising, walked boldly toward the stream. The croaking was then recommenced, but it ceased in a few moments, as Winnihah now, instead of retreating, came forward to meet the young trapper.

Indian though she was, Guy, instinctively impressed by her wonderful beauty, lifted his bear-skin cap.

"You're a sweet creatur', gal," he remarked, "thar's *you*, and I am t'other ways, powerful ugly with my one eye—hyar's *me*!"

So saying he bowed, and presented the moccasin.

"Thankee," said Winnihah, in accents like a silver bell. "Omeeno said you bring to me."

"Do you love that Omeeno, Injun gal?"

She hung her head without replying, and tapped the ground with one little foot. Soon a shadow crossed her face, still she said nothing.

"It's plain you don't, wharfore that Omeeno and I must hev a scrimmage. Ef he had been any thing to you, I mought hev spared him for your sweet sake, but as he ain't, it's all up with the critter."

So saying, he bounded toward the Indian figure, seated motionless on the log, now about a hundred yards distant. Reaching it, he grasped it by the shoulder, when, to his surprise, it fell to pieces, thus showing that it merely consisted of a few pieces of wood, so arranged and dressed up as to resemble an *Indian*!

Instantly the wily man fell to the ground, and not a moment too soon, for the crack of a rifle, quickly followed by that of another, and the trapper heard two bullets whiz over his head in opposite directions!

CHAPTER III.

STRATEGY.

GLANCING up, Red Claw beheld a small cloud of smoke coming from the rock upon which Chick was stationed. It was followed by the person of Chick, who now sprung to his feet, and commenced descending the rock. Turning to see whence the other shot had proceeded, Guy saw another thin cloud of smoke rolling from a clump of bushes, skirting the east bank of White river, and about two hundred yards distant. He also perceived that the Indian girl, Winnihah, was gone.

To rush toward the bushes was with the trapper the work of a few moments.

Nobody was there, but the marks of feet were in the grass fringing the bank. Guy at once concluded that a canoe must have been there. He glanced down the river, discovering a projecting point of land, round which the frail craft might easily have disappeared.

Rushing to this point, Guy had confirmation of his suspicions. A canoe was there, containing the half-prostrate form of the Indian Omeeno, and the girl Winnihah, who was paddling noiselessly as a spirit, yet with remarkable swiftness. So rapid, in fact, was the dip of her paddle, that Guy only caught a brief glimpse of the canoe, which, swift as a flash of light, disappeared the next moment round another promontory fifty yards below the spot occupied by the trapper. The latter had lifted his rifle impulsively, then as quickly lowered it, fearful that his bullet, instead of hitting Omeeno, might strike his beautiful companion.

"Glad not fire," said Chick, now at his elbow, "might

hit girl—two very close together. Think *me* wounded *him* !”

“Think yer did, Chick—thar’s *you* !”

The two now hurried toward the bend round which the canoe had last vanished, just in time to see the frail craft disappear in a mist-cloud far beyond.

“For the present, we’ll jist halt whar we are and *preceeds* to explanations,” said Guy, “arter which I intend to foller up that Injun gal—thar’s *her* !”

“What use ?” inquired Chick.

“Because I’ve taken a fancy to her,” was the reply. “I can’t git that gal’s *beyooty* out of my mind, and although it’s presumption in a one-eyed ogre like me to expect her to fall in love with me, still I’m detarmined to keep her in sight and if I kin, *bribe* her to be my wife !”

“Me like beauty, too,” said Chick ; “never see girl me feel so strange to before.”

The one eye of the trapper burned like a live coal, as he turned it upon the boy.

“Hark ye !” he fiercely exclaimed, clinching his fist, “now don’t you go to fallin’ in love with that gal, and showin’ off your graces to her. Ef yer do, I’ll shoot yer like a weasel—thar’s *me* !”

A sullen expression crossed the lad’s face.

“Love free like the wind !” he muttered, “go and come. If girl love, she love, *nothing* help !”

Guy clenched his teeth and seized the lad’s shoulder in an iron grip.

“Be car’ful, boy, be car’ful !”

The lad waited until the trapper released him, then answered, calmly :

“Me *love* not girl ! only say feel *strange* to her ! Can’t say how feel in *time*.”

“Well, well,” said Guy, whose anger now seemed to have entirely subsided, “it was wrong o’ me to git mad with yer, and hyar’s my hand. Now let’s explain matters.”

This Chick did at once. After separating from Guy, he had proceeded, as mentioned, toward the White river by a roundabout course, which soon brought him to the rock near the place of rendezvous. Thence he saw the girl Winnihah,

and further beyond, crouching in the hollow, the person of Omeeno, rifle in hand, watching the brushwood toward which Red Claw was gliding on hands and knees. The Indian's intention was evident: he was waiting to shoot the trapper, perhaps the moment he should reach the rendezvous. Chick had the advantage of the Indian, for while the red-man was fully exposed to his view, he was so screened by the bushes that Omeeno could not have seen him had he tried to do so. Soon Chick's keen eyes detected Guy, approaching through the bushes, wherefore he made the signal of warning agreed upon.

Still the Indian, who, it was evident, also saw him, did not fire, a forbearance for which the boy could only account by supposing that it was his wish to wait and see that Winnihah obtained the moccasin, before shooting the hunter. Finally, just as Guy discovered the deception of the effigy, a deception doubtless practiced to lure him on and lull his suspicions, the crouching Indian, who had now changed his position round to the bushes bordering the river, that he might thus obtain a better chance at the trapper, lifted his rifle to fire. Chick, who not for a moment had lost sight of the red-skin's movements, instantly took aim at the fellow and sent his bullet whizzing on its errand.

"Ef it had been my shot, he'd have been a dead dog—thar's *me*!" ejaculated Red Claw, as Chick concluded.

"Shall we go back to cabin now?" inquired the boy.

"Back, no! I must see more o' that gal! Besides, I owe that infarnal red-skin a grudge for the trick he tried to play me! I shall keep on in pursuit of 'em both!"

By this time, the rays of a cloudless sun had partially dissipated the mist. Twittering birds were hopping round among the branches over the heads of the two, and the scream of the wild duck was heard in the distant marsh.

"Come on, my boy," said Guy, "let's be moving; thar's *us*!"

They started, keeping along the right bank of the river, which was thickly skirted with bushes. Now and then, they would glance toward the water, hoping to get sight of the canoe, but they were disappointed.

Finally, however, after they had followed the course of the

stream for about five miles, Guy suddenly halted, laying a hand upon Chick's shoulder.

"Do yer see her?"

"No!"

"Thar she is!" pointing toward an opening in the shrubbery beyond the opposite bank.

Still Chick could see nothing of the girl, although he exerted himself to the utmost to pierce the mist-cloud, hovering over the opening. The superiority of his companion's vision, however, did not surprise him in the least. He had seen more remarkable examples of it than the present, in the course of his experience with the trapper.

"Yes, thar she is!" continued Guy, "and she's standing perfectly still—seeming in wait for some person, which I'm afraid aren't me!"

"Why go after her?" inquired Chick. "She love the red-man."

"You ain't sartin of that; I think t'otherways. Hello! if she ain't comin' towards us!"

In fact, the Indian girl now was seen by both spectators approaching the edge of the stream. The sight of the two hunters did not seem to frighten her in the least.

To their surprise, she bowed to Guy and smiled sweetly on him. That smile made the heart of the trapper fairly bound in his breast. He took off his cap, and notwithstanding that he felt almost certain that the girl was an accomplice in the attempt upon his life, he bowed low to her and blushed to the roots of his hair. Winnehah evidently perceived the impression she made upon the trapper. She walked to the bushes skirting the shore, and disengaged therefrom the same canoe in which she had previously been seen.

"Will white man cross and follow me?" she inquired, again smiling sweetly.

"No, don't go," said Chick, clutching the trapper's arm; "she want to play another trick."

Red Claw, however, shook off the grasp of his young adviser.

"Yes, purty one!" he exclaimed, "I'll follow yer to the ends of the 'arth, ef yer wish it!"

Vainly the boy begged his companion not to listen to the

sweet voice of one whom he deemed a deceitful siren. The hunter was completely infatuated, and would not listen to him.

"Well, if will go, me go too," said Chick.

"No, you don't *want* to go. You may stay back ef yer like?"

Chick gave the speaker a reproachful glance.

"Me not afraid to go," said he. "Go wherever you go."

"Well, then, I tell yer what you may do. You may act as scout, and ef thar's treachery meant, you can see it and warn me—thar's *you*!"

This Chick willingly consented to do, after which, Winnihah having shoved the canoe across the stream, the two stepped into it. Soon they were on the other side, when Winnihah having deposited the canoe among the bushes, beckoned to Guy to follow her. He did so without hesitation, and away went the Indian girl, dancing along before the rough trapper like a fairy, while Chick, who had held a moment's conference with his master, struck off in a direction at right angles to that pursued by Guy.

For a long time he moved on without seeing any thing suspicious; then, turning, he continued upon a course parallel with the one his late companion and the girl had pursued.

Among other thoughts that passed through his mind, was the one as to what had become of Omeeno—the wounded Indian. Was the fellow not hurt so bad as he seemed, and lurking somewhere near, watching for a chance to waylay and shoot the man whose life he had previously attempted? He would have asked Winnehah what had become of the Indian, had he not thought that she would disguise the truth, or endeavor otherwise to mislead him.

Finally, however, he concluded that the girl had left her lover hidden in some cave or in some hole in the ground, and that it was her intention to lure Guy into some ambush of others of her tribe.

This thought was a very disagreeable one to Chick, who loved his master so much that he would willingly have sacrificed his life in his defense. He retraced his way until he discovered the trail of the two, and then proceeded to follow

it up with a skill and rapidity almost equal to that of the bloodhound.

Meanwhile his surmise regarding the Indian's having been hidden, was correct. He had not proceeded far after the trapper had started to follow the girl, when, apparently crawling from under the very water's edge on the bank of the river, but in reality emerging from an earth-cave artfully concealed by twigs and shrubbery, appeared the form of Omeeno, his face rendered doubly hideous by the dirt mixed with the war-paint.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HORSE-THIEF.

JUST beneath the calf of the Indian's leg, which had been laid bare, was a white bandage, showing where he had been wounded by Chick's bullet. It was a flesh wound, but must have been exceedingly painful; and yet, neither by grimace nor other sign, did the red-man show the extent of his suffering. His face was calm and stern—his keen, eagle eyes gleamed with as steady a light as if he were perfectly well, and about to start upon the war-path, or on a hunting expedition.

Crawling on his hands and knees, he gazed in the direction where Winnehah, followed by the trapper, had last disappeared, a half-expectant look gradually gathering upon his otherwise immobile countenance.

For an hour he sat thus, when a light step saluted his ear, and a few minutes after, breaking through the shrubbery, came the Indian girl Winnihah.

"It is well," said Omeeno; "has the white dog been led astray?"

"Yes."

"Winnihah is well worthy to be Omeeno's squaw!"

The girl cast down her eyes, and something like a shudder convulsed her frame.

"Winnihah is ready to help Omeeno, who belongs to her

tribe," she answered. "She will do whatever he wishes. So she promised Woo-no-le, her mother, when she died."

So saying, she sat down on the bank, but instead of looking at Omeeno, she gazed pensively into the stream.

"Let us go," said the Indian warrior.

At these words the girl, disengaging the canoe from the bushes, helped the wounded man into it, after which she proceeded to paddle down the stream.

They had proceeded about five miles, when a house became visible, looming up through a grove of small trees about four hundred yards from the river.

It was a frame building, two stories in height, built of logs closely cemented together with clay, and containing two windows on each side.

On the first story a rude piazza had been erected; the railing composed of thick, enormous logs, behind which a small party of resolute white men, sheltered, might keep hundreds of Indians at bay. The doors of the building were heavy and massive, also the shutters, and provided with heavy iron bars, which protected them by being thrust through grooves on the inside. One of the windows was a few feet above a small stable, in rear of the building, near which the owner of the house sat upon his piazza under the shadow of a chestnut tree, smoking a huge pipe, as the canoe was impelled swiftly shoreward. It was soon alongside the bank, when throwing down his pipe, the smoker advanced toward it. He was a stout, heavily-framed man of middle age, with a hard, repulsive countenance, lighted by a pair of small, ferret-like eyes. His dress consisted of a leather hunting-shirt, leggings, and pants of fringed deerskin. His face was almost as dark as a mulatto's; in fact, it had been asserted that Pierre Lemay—such was his name—had negro blood in his veins.

It was also hinted by wandering trappers and others, who had occasion now and then to visit him, that he was not overfriendly to the whites; but so cunningly could he veil his real feelings, that there was no certainty upon the matter. Perhaps one reason for this supposition was the fact that Pierre could have lived so long in this wild region without being molested by the Indians who infested the country. There was his house, miles away from any other habitation, and yet

it had stood for fifteen years without being touched by hostile hands, excepting those of a party of Crows, who, however, had been repulsed with loss.

One thing was certain: if Pierre *was* friendly to the Indians, then he must have the means of getting on the right side of most *all* the tribes who knew of his whereabouts, and many of whom were at war with each other.

Perhaps some idea of the way he managed to do this may be arrived at, when it is stated that often, at night, parties of Indians came to his house with stolen horses and other property, receiving in exchange fire-water and ammunition. Before break of day—indeed, sometimes at midnight—Pierre would start off with these horses, seeking some of the border settlements, where he would dispose of his stock to good advantage.

Such was the man who now came sauntering toward the canoe as Winnihah stepped forth, and who took off his cap and bowed low, evidently much impressed by the beauty of the girl.

"Ah, pretty one!" he exclaimed, "come again—eh? Glad to see ye! Who hev we hyar?" pointing toward Omeeno, whose face being turned from him, he did not at once recognize.

As the Indian looked round, however, glances of recognition passed between the two.

"Omeeno wounded," said Winnihah, "he wish me bring here."

"Oh sartinly! you're welcome! *you'll* nurse him, I s'pose!" he added, leeringly at the girl.

It was evident she did not like the glance, for she pouted and stamped one of her little feet, impatiently.

"No," she answered, "Winnihah must not stay."

"Not stay!" exclaimed Pierre, in a disappointed voice "and why not?"

"Got other work to do," she briefly answered.

The truth was that from the first moment, six months before, Pierre, who was a bachelor, living with his niece—a pretty girl of fifteen—had been smitten by the remarkable beauty of the dusky maiden. Anxious to procure her for his wife, he would readily have proposed to do so to Omeeno, had the latter been her father or brother. His being her *lover*,

made Pierre, who from motives of interest was anxious to keep on friendly terms with the Indians, extremely cautious how he showed his passion to the fiery son of the forest.

"Come on," he said, "come on. The Indian shall be welcome until he is able to move about."

So saying, he helped Omeeno out of the canoe, and assisted by Winnihah, conducted him to the house.

The party were met at the gate by Pierre's adopted daughter—a pretty girl of fifteen, with fresh, rosy cheeks, and eyes that sparkled like stars.

Ada Leman, while she could handle a rifle or ride a horse with hunter-like dexterity, was an intelligent maiden, having read much that was both interesting and instructive. Her disposition was entirely different from Pierre's, she being gentle, affectionate and spirited at the same time.

The sight of the wounded Indian seemed to rouse all the pity natural to the female bosom, and she hurried within to prepare the couch which was to receive the red-man.

Soon the Indian was ensconced upon a comfortable bed in a neat little chamber, overlooking the vast expanse of prairie-land bounded by blue hills in the rear of the house.

"There!" ejaculated Winnihah, "Omeeno wanted me to bring him here! Well, me done so. The white man will be kind to him, for the white man is a friend to all the Indians, so Omeeno said!"

"Yes," answered Pierre, "many wounded red-men hev shared the *hospitability* of my roof, and hev paid arterwards with a present of hosses. I hope this chap will get over the scratch he received."

As he spoke, his eyes gleaming wistfully were turned toward Winnihah, who, however, endured the glance with stoical calmness.

"Don't mind wound," answered Omeeno, contemptuously, "soon get over. Hope yet take scalp of one who give wound."

"And who was that?"

In a few words, the Indian explained all, and when he had concluded, Pierre frowned and shrugged his shoulders.

"So that infarnal Indian-fighter RED CLAW war at the bottom of the bizness," he said. "I never liked that chap or

the boy with him. Whenever they see me they always look at me as ef they guessed what my bizness war, and they would like to put a stop to it. So you say the one-eyed ogre are smitten with Winnihah?"

"Yes! know so—white man in love, like blind bird. Fly all round everywhere! one fool!"

An idea seemed to flash upon the mind of the horse-thief. His brow darkened as he planned a scheme.

"Tell yer what!" he said, bringing his fist down on the table with great force. "I hev a plan. Ef Winnihah could only lure that one-eyed chap hyar, I think—"

Here he caught the reproachful glance of Ada's blue eyes and came to a pause.

"Leave the room!" he cried, sternly.

The girl obeyed; but she had heard enough to comprehend, with her knowledge of her uncle's character, what were his intentions regarding the trapper.

The moment she was gone, he continued: "Lure that feller hyar, and then—then *she*—this Winnihah of ours—while he is shut up hyar, kin go fur some of her tribe to come hyar and make him prisoner!"

"Good! Winnihah shall do it!" exclaimed Omeeno, turning toward the Indian girl.

She bowed meekly in acquiescence, and at once turned to depart.

"Hold!" cried Pierre, "Omeeno says that you have already led the fellow on a false scent."

"Yes!" cried Omeeno, "she make him follow, so he get far away from spot where Omeeno been hiding—Winnihah cunning as fox and bright as the sun!"

The Indian smiled, for he was in a good humor. The idea of getting Red Claw—the famed trapper and foe of the red-men—into the clutches of his tribe, was a pleasant one, and would reflect luster upon his name.

"Where is the fellow, now?" inquired Pierre.

"So many miles away from White river me left him," said the girl, counting on five fingers, "going on wrong course!"

"Well, see hyar," exclaimed Pierre, "the Crows, who are at war with your tribe, may be met with on the way. Ef you should be taken pris'ner by them—"

"A hundred Crows could not take Winnihah!" said the girl, drawing herself up proudly. "Winnihah's step is like the wind! Run very fast!"

"Still yer mought be taken. Now, ef I went with you—"

Winnihah shuddered, and hastened to interrupt him:

"No—no—go alone!"

"Be it so, then," said Pierre, in a disappointed tone; "but remember, ef any thing happens to you, it won't be my fault!"

Winnihah bowed, said a few words in the Indian tongue to Omeeno, and then left the room.

The horse-thief followed her to the door, but she did not give him the chance to say to her another word. Away she went, speeding to the river and at once embarking in her canoe.

Pierre stood watching her until her form had disappeared round a bend in the river; then he entered the house.

At dinner that day, he said to Ada:

"What did you guess was up, from what you heerd me say, before I ordered you to leave the room up-stairs?"

The girl frankly told him that she believed he meditated harm against the famous trapper, Red Claw—meant to ensnare him into the hands of his enemies.

"Well, and what of it?"

The girl colored deeply: the dark, snake-like eye of the other seemed to pierce her through.

"Oh, uncle! have mercy upon him! Remember he and—and—his—his—son are good people!"

Pierre sneered; he could perceive that his niece had not forgotten the handsome, half-civilized Indian youth, Harry Chick, who, months before, had met the girl traveling with her uncle across the prairie. Chick, at the time, was in the company of the trapper, who paused to exchange a few words with Pierre with whom he was slightly acquainted. While the two were conversing, Chick paid Ada several of those little courtesies natural between the young of opposite sexes. He brought her some water from a spring hard by, and made her a present of a pretty drinking-cup curiously fashioned out of laurel wood. When they parted, the two had been very

agreeably impressed by each other, so much so, in fact, on the part of Ada, that she had carefully preserved the cup, locked up in a writing-desk, ever since.

It was therefore natural that the girl, averse to cruelty of all kinds, should be doubly so where Chick was concerned. Pierre, however, who was anxious that she should endeavor to bewitch a certain wealthy Spanish planter named Pedro, disapproved of her *penchant* for the adopted youth.

"Girl!" he sternly exclaimed, "what do you intend to do?"

"What can I do? For God's sake spare these men! They have never offended you!"

"No, not yet! But I can read suspicion in their eyes, every time we meet."

The girl said no more, and soon after Pierre left the room. Then Ada, leaning her head upon her hand, reflected.

She had seen, with the intuition of her sex, that Lemman was smitten with the pretty Winnihah, and knew, therefore, that this, more than any other, was the reason why he was so anxious to get out of the way the brave Red Claw, who, with his powerful will, might prove a formidable rival.

"They shall not be thus entrapped!" exclaimed Ada, suddenly starting to her feet with flashing eyes. "They shall not, if *I* can help it. I will at least make an effort to save them! This I would do," she added, with heaving bosom, "even though they were perfect strangers to me!"

As she spoke, the door suddenly opened, and Pierre, whose dark face discovered that he had heard every word, entered the room.

"So you intend to play the rebel, eh?" he cried, sneering. "Come here!"

He caught her by the arm, and without another word, drawing her to a small, dark room, containing one window, he thrust her therein, and closed and locked the door.

Grieved and indignant, Ada threw herself down upon a chair, weeping passionately. Soon, however, she dried her eyes and again fell to reflecting. The window of her prison was beyond her reach, but there was a bed in the room, by means of which she doubted not she could reach it. To

remove the bars would not be difficult, as these were slipped loosely through iron grooves.

After removing them, what next?

The window was not more than ten feet above the roof of the stable where Pierre kept his own horses—a couple of thoroughbred coursers, as fleet and strong as the hurricane!

It would, therefore, be easy enough to get from the window to the ground—the roof of the stable being sloping—and mount one of the horses.

Chance, guided by a merciful Providence, and the knowledge Ada possessed of the country, must decide the rest.

She would seek Red Claw and Chick, and if she succeeded in finding them, warn them of their danger!

Of resolute and decided nature, where her affections or feelings were enlisted, Ada proceeded at once to carry her design of escape into execution.

She was successful!

While Pierre, little dreaming of what she was doing, was in the chamber of Omeeno, talking to the Indian, Ada, mounted on one of his fleetest steeds, was scouring through the forest!

CHAPTER V.

IN PERIL.

ON leaving Pierre's house, Winnihah had repaired to the canoe and commenced paddling up the river.

She continued on to the spot whence she had embarked with the wounded Indian, and concealing the canoe, proceeded to hunt up the one-eyed trapper.

Skilled in following trails, she soon was upon the man's tracks. It was several hours before she came in sight of him, seated upon a shelf of one of the Ozark peaks; for in this direction the Indian girl's steps had been turned, previous to her retracing her way back toward the White river.

Upon the rocks which she had scaled her light step had of course left no marks, so that, after tracing her thus far,

Guy had been at fault, unable to determine whither she had gone after leaving this point. Wandering up and down, hither and thither among the hills, the trapper had finally seated himself upon the shelf of rock alluded to.

He had been seated thus about an hour, when Winnihah again broke upon his sight. Climbing a lofty peak behind him, she contrived to attract his attention by detaching some loose earth, and sending it rolling down the declivity. The trapper turned, to see her standing in an attitude of the most bewitching grace.

"Hello! beyootiful one!" he exclaimed, springing up. "Thar's *you*, sure enough!"

The mist by this time was nearly dissipated, but detached clouds of it still were rolling through the air. One of these clouds seemed to rest upon the head of the beautiful girl, and illuminated by the rays of the afternoon sun, resembled a crown of glory!

To the trapper's delight, the maiden beckoned to him with one arm, while the other was busy with the long, black tresses blown by the wind over her face.

"I'll foller yer to the end of the 'arth!" cried Red Claw, enthusiastically, as he clambered toward her; "thar's *me*!"

He had nearly gained the summit of the peak, when the girl turned, beckoned to him again, and with a burst of silver laughter, fled, thus tempting him to the pursuit.

This strange behavior, while it puzzled him, inspired the hunter with fresh ardor to overtake her. While completely fascinated by her beauty, he half feared that her mind was deranged; for would a girl in her right senses beckon to him and then run away?

No suspicion of foul play on the part of the beautiful siren entered his mind; still, with the caution obtained by long familiarity with Indian cunning, the man kept his hand upon his rifle, ready to unsling it at a moment's notice.

Meanwhile on went the girl, her course now leading along a high rocky wall toward the identical chasm which she had leaped on the day before.

Did she intend to leap it again?

Just as Red Claw asked himself this question, Winnihah

paused, stood a moment with her head bent sideways in listening attitude; then, turning, fled in a direction at right-angles with that she had previously pursued.

The air, the manner of the beautiful Indian, at once convinced Guy that there was *peril of some kind* in the direction her ear had been turned.

Instead, therefore, of continuing to pursue the girl, he ran forward a few paces; then paused and listened in his turn, to hear the scarcely audible sound of footsteps approaching.

That they were Indians, the trapper knew by the length of the strides, shown by the time intervening between each step. He glanced toward the girl, and perceiving that she also had paused, motioned to her to keep on. Instead, however, of obeying, she crouched down behind a rocky projection, where she remained, with earnest eyes awaiting what was to follow.

A few minutes had elapsed, when Guy suddenly threw himself down flat, as the head of an Indian emerged to view above a cone of rock about fifty yards ahead! It was soon followed by another and another, until Guy counted a party of six Indians, evidently Crows, advancing in single file!

Meanwhile the trapper had the advantage of them in this, that while he could see the red-men, they could not see him.

Soon, however, he must be discovered if he remained in his present position; so, crawling along on his hands and knees, he slowly approached the spot containing the Indian girl. The latter, as he drew near, rose to her feet and fled with the speed of a deer!

Thus erect, her form was visible to the advancing Crows, who, setting up a yell, instantly started in pursuit.

Should Red Claw remain in his present position, they must soon discover him; they must also do so, if he attempted a retreat in the same direction whence he had come. In this dilemma, he concluded to crawl *backward* toward a rocky rift about ten feet behind him, which he could gain he judged before the Crows could come near enough to discover him. Instantly he proceeded to carry out his plan; and in a few minutes, still undiscovered, was safely ensconced in the rocky rift. Thence he now cautiously watched the Indians, who,

intent upon overtaking the girl, were gazing toward her, their side faces being thus turned to the trapper.

They were a warlike-looking set, armed to the teeth with rifles, tomahawks, and painted in a hideous manner. They ran with incredible swiftness, and yet not as fast as the fleet-footed Winnihah, who seemed to fairly skim along over the rocky ridges. Perceiving this, Guy waited until the pursuers had passed him a few hundreds of yards, when he emerged from his hiding-place, and cautiously, yet swiftly, followed in their tracks.

There were few men at that period as swift and agile-footed as the famed trapper, Guy Winton, so that he contrived, by dodging about from rock to rock, to keep the dusky runners in sight. As to Winnihah, she was by this time far ahead, descending the mountain on the side toward the White river.

"She mought git cl'ar of them scamps—thar's *her*! Then ag'in she mought not," cried the trapper, grasping his rifle firmly.

He knew that if speed had been all that was necessary for the girl's escape, she would get clear of her enemies, but unfortunately, *endurance* was also required. She must soon become very breathless and be obliged to stop, while the red-men could run three times the distance already passed over without its telling upon them.

Winnihah was also well aware of this, and therefore, feeling that she must soon stop, she resolved upon strategy. Turning and ascertaining the exact situation of her enemies, she suddenly sprung upon a rocky ledge, protruding from the side of one of those stupendous, apparently unfathomable ravines, which split the rocks of the Ozark range.

The slightest misstep on the part of the brave girl must cause her to fall into the dark depths, but she kept on with steady, unflinching step, proceeding at a walk which might enable her to recover her breath.

Meanwhile, her pursuers now were unable to see her, the ledge being some ten feet beneath the upper edge of the ravine. All along the sides of the ravine, above the girl's head, here and there protruding from rifts, were clumps of laurel bushes and other kinds of shrubbery.

This Winnihah looked upon as a fortunate circumstance, for she intended soon to clamber up and screen herself among the bushes. These becoming thicker as she proceeded, she resolved to keep on a ways further before hiding herself. Soon, however, she paused, for a startling fact was now made known to her; one which caused the blood to fairly curdle in her veins.

As mentioned, the ledge extended along the side of the ravine; but it was not the same width its whole extent. It kept growing narrower and narrower, until finally it tapered off as it were into nothing, mingling with the rest of the rock, so that at this point *there was no ledge at all!*

The Indian girl glanced upward and perceived that the bushes did not grow near enough to the top for her to reach it in this manner; then she glanced downward into the dark, yawning depths, and for a moment her brain grew dizzy.

It was, however, only for a moment; the next she recovered her resolution and decided upon her course, which was to proceed straight forward a few more yards and then clamber up and conceal herself among the bushes. She did so, climbing from a point where the ledge was almost too narrow to afford a footing, the better to render her capture impossible.

Meanwhile, the Crows, keeping on, soon arrived at the edge of the ravine. Here they paused, as if in doubt, holding a consultation. They had seen the girl spring downward, and several of them seemed to think that she had plunged into the ravine to escape her pursuers, preferring death to capture. The rest, however, glancing keenly along the bushes, at once divined that Winnihah had hidden herself somewhere in the shrubbery.

The moment this suspicion was made known, the red-men all sprung upon the ledge, and with almost incredible swiftness proceeded along it in single file.

Not unwatched, however, for Red Claw, soon arriving upon the edge of the gully, saw them, and at once divining all, kept close behind them, screened, as he proceeded, by the rocky projections upon the upper edge of the hollow.

The Crows continued on, and finally arrived at the point which would not permit them to go further, when the foremost paused, and glanced keenly up among the shrubbery

This, however, was so thick that Winnihah could not be detected, while there was not the slightest movement on the part of the concealed one to show her whereabouts. She had reached her hiding-place, and there ensconced herself without displacing the shrubbery, rather gliding than climbing to her position; so that the Indians could not discover any sign of her. A whispered consultation was held; the red-men were all now inclined to believe that the girl had really sprung from the rocky height. To make sure, however, one of them hurled his tomahawk into the shrubbery, and was about climbing up to commence a search, when the Indian maiden, who had been obliged to dodge the weapon, in regaining her position, made a rustling in the bushes. With a yell of triumph, he who had hurled the tomahawk now scrambled quickly toward her, while, drawing herself along a few yards, Winnihah clung to the stem of a laurel bush with both hands, her feet hanging down toward the deep, impenetrable chasm of the ravine!

Notwithstanding the peril of her situation, the girl showed no sign of fear.

"Back!" she exclaimed, in broken English, addressing her enemies. "Crows never get Winnihah! She let go root, and drop down into ravine!"

Even the Crows seemed appalled by the girl's peril, while a murmur of admiration circulated among them at her exhibition of dauntless courage.

Pity, however, formed no part of these savage breasts. The red-men crawled toward her, and the foremost was within a few yards of her, when, compressing her lips, she prepared for the fearful descent into death and eternity!

In fact, she was about letting go her hold on the laurel bush, when the voice of Red Claw was suddenly heard, splitting the air like a thunderbolt.

"Hold on, gal—thar's *you*! As sure as etarnity, I'll settle them Crows for yer, and make 'em *crow* on t'other side of thar mouths!"

On hearing the voice, the Indians all turned simultaneously, when the sharp report of the trapper's rifle rung out upon the air, and down went the foremost Indian, tumbling, with one wild, prolonged scream into the fathomless chasm.

Perceiving that assistance was so close at hand, Winnihah

now clung resolutely to the bush, while Red Claw, still lying upon his belly, proceeded to reload.

The position of the man was peculiarly advantageous; so much so, in fact, that he had the gang of Crows completely at his mercy.

This may be easily understood.

In the first place, the portuberant ridge of rock, extending along the upper side of the ravine, behind which the man lay, would completely screen him from the shots of the Indians, who were too close to the inside of the ravine to bring their pieces in range of him, while, on the contrary, Red Claw being above, and the ridge being sloping, could at any moment pick off one or two of their number with his rifle. Secondly, as the Indians could only proceed along the ledge in single file, the trapper could load and retreat fast enough to keep them all in check, if not to shoot every man of their number before they could get back to the point whence they had started.

This the Crows readily perceived, and although evidently much mortified at the manner in which they had been outwitted, their stolid, sullen countenances betrayed no emotion.

"Come," continued Guy, when he had reloaded, "jist walk back now, every man of you. Ef yer don't, I'll hev yer al-roasted in brimstone—thar's *you*!"

The Indians stood exchanging glances a few moments, then quick words passed between them, after which, as by agreement, they darted up into the shrubbery and there screened themselves. Seeming determined to make sure of the death of Winnihah, several of them now made a spring for the girl.

Knowing that she was guarded from above, however, she still clung to the bush, when Guy's rifle again cracked, sending another Crow to eternity!

The others then shrunk back to their retreat among the bushes, where several of them held a whispered consultation.

Meanwhile, Guy labored under extreme anguish of mind. He feared every moment, that the Crows, baffled in their intention of capturing Winnihah, would send a bullet through

her brain. Perhaps they would have done so ere this but for the extreme difficulty of handling their rifles while in their present situation, each being obliged to hold one hand at least to a bush.

The trapper, therefore, resolved to attempt the rescue of the Indian girl, by means of the line of deer-hide which he carried slung over his shoulders.

Forming a bowline hitch at the end, he quickly lowered it to the girl, instructing her to fasten it under her armpits. To accomplish this, she was obliged to let go the bush with one hand.

As she did so, the twig cracked and a mass of detached earth rolling down from around the roots, seemed to betoken that the bush would soon give way.

"Quick, gal, quick—thar's you!" shrieked Guy, in an agony of suspense.

Another cracking of the twig! The sweat came out in big drops on the brow of the trapper, who, in his excitement, trembled in every limb.

Soon, however, he breathed freely. The girl had secured the line around her breast, just beneath her armpits, and the man commenced to haul her up.

At this, the baffled Indians yelled fiercely, and several of them contrived to discharge their rifles, which, however, owing to their awkward position, fell wide of the mark.

An instant later the girl was safe by the side of Red Claw.

"Now, beyooty!" he exclaimed, "you are all right for the present. None of that, you infarnal red skunks!" he added, pointing his rifle at one of the Indians, who, followed by several others, was about taking advantage of his being engaged to make an escape along the ledge.

They retreated, however, the moment the trapper spoke. As they did so, he turned, to discover that Winnihah, after being so nobly rescued by him, was speeding away with the swiftness of a deer.

"Ah, my purty one!" moaned Guy, in a grieved voice, "this are sarving a poor fellow very bad. Well, well, I don't w'ose the gal knows what she are about. In my opinion, she's a half-witted!"

So saying, he adopted a stratagem to keep the Crows where they were, for some time at least, while he went on in pursuit of Winnihah. Crouching down, he fixed his bear-skin cap so that, just visible above the ridge, it would give the Indians the idea that he was still lying on his belly watching them. Another—one more cruel than the trapper—might not have quitted the spot until he had shot every one of the red-men; but Guy was averse to bloodshed, except in defense of himself or others.

"Thar, red-skins!" he muttered, as he quitted the spot and hastened after the girl, "hope you'll hev a pleasant time of it—thar's *you*!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEETING.

CHICK had searched a long time for his master, but, owing to the trapper's ascending the rocks, he had lost track of him. Concluding that Red Claw had crossed the mountains and gone back to the cabin in the woods, the boy proceeded at once in that direction. He had not gone far, however, when he came upon the unmistakable tracks of Indians, leading the opposite way. He halted and hesitated a moment whether to follow the trail or keep on toward the cabin. While thinking, the familiar report of Red Claw's rifle up among the mountains decided him. He would have known the sound of that rifle anywhere, from the peculiar spiteful crack of the piece.

Turning, therefore, he hastened in the direction of the noise, and was soon climbing the mountains. As has been mentioned, a considerable period of time—almost an hour—elapsed before the rifle was discharged, so that Chick, having no guide to direct him, had traveled some distance on the wrong course before the second report greeted his ears.

Following this, he hurried swiftly along, but as his way was impeded by rocky projections and rifts, he was hardly within half a mile of the scene of peril, when the third

report — this time from the rifles of the Indians — was heard.

He kept on, and in the course of an hour arrived at the point where Winnihah's rescue had taken place; but by this time the Indians had discovered the stratagem Guy had played them, and made off, so that Chick could now detect no sign of what had taken place except a certain displacement of the shrubbery above the ledge.

That the reports of the rifles had proceeded from here, he therefore felt convinced, and the fear that Red Claw had been captured came across his mind, filling it with great anxiety. He believed to have discovered confirmation of his fears, when, chancing to move a short distance from the ledge, he came upon the remnants of Guy's bear-skin cap, hacked to pieces, and apparently by tomahawks!

He picked up the remnants, and in no easy frame of mind, continued his way, using his eyes and ears as he proceeded.

Before night, he had descended the mountains on the side toward the White river, without yet seeing any sign of his master, when, filled with gloomy forebodings, he sat down upon a moss-covered stone, and having partaken of the frugal contents of his haversack, he bowed his face on his hands.

He was roused from his meditations by the sound of horses' hoofs, and glancing through a grove of trees in the distance, he caught sight of a white girl mounted upon a horse, riding as if for her life.

To spring to his feet and hasten forward, so as to intercept her and inquire the cause of her riding so fast, was, with the boy, the work of a moment. Moving on a course at right-angles to that taken by the horseman, he came upon her, as she was dashing on toward the mountains.

The moment he recognized the fair rider, who, as stated, was none other than Ada Leman, he blushed to the brows, while his eyes glowed with delight. She recognized him, and at once stopped her horse, when he lifted his cap and bowed to her.

"Let me see: your name is Chick," she said, lowering her eyes before his ardent glance.

"Yes—so Guy call me."

"Where is Guy now?—that is Red Claw, is it not?"

"Yes. Me know not where he is now; been looking for him, but can not find; 'fraid been taken prisoner."

And he went on to explain.

"This is too bad!" exclaimed the girl, sorrowfully. "I have ridden expressly to seek him and warn him of peril—all the way from my uncle's house."

She then proceeded to describe the scheme for his capture concocted by Pierre and Omeeno.

"Brave girl—good as beautiful!" said Chick, again bowing to the maiden.

The girl blushed and looked pleased.

"My errand being done, I will now go back," she said.

"Me see safe home?"

"Oh no; I am not afraid. It is not five miles from here to my uncle's house."

"Crows on war-path—Indians not far off—see trail," said Chick; "so think better see safe home."

"Had you not better see Winton, so as to tell him of the scheme of my uncle?"

"Me been look all over; can not find; better go with girl safe home."

"My uncle would not like it," said Ada, who evidently was not at all displeased with the offer; "he would contrive some way to punish you!"

The boy drew himself up.

"Not afraid! Chick not afraid of any man!" he said, defiantly.

Still, there was nothing boastful in the way he spoke. He made the remark with that quiet consciousness of power which, as often as modesty, is the proof of merit.

Meanwhile his eyes remained fixed upon the beautiful form and face of the rider. Having come out without her hat, her dark curls, slightly tinged with gold, rippled all round her shoulders, kissed by the south wind, while her eyes glowed as brightly as stars. Her cheeks, flushed with exercise, were fresher than the rosy down upon the peach, while her lips, half parted, revealed her even teeth, as white as the ridges we see between the crimson folds of the sea-shell. She was an excellent horsewoman, and sat the animal with unrivaled grace, her tiny feet just visible beneath the skirt.

"Well, if you can not find Guy, and—and—you choose to accompany me within sight of the house, you may do so," answered the girl.

Accordingly the two were soon moving in the direction of Pierre's residence, Chick, with agile step, keeping pace with the horse whose rein he held.

The two had not proceeded far on their way, when they saw a horseman approaching. As he drew nearer, Ada shuddered.

"Let us turn aside," she said, "into that grove of trees, and perhaps he will not see us."

The boy complied, leading the horse into the grove, but not in time to escape the observation of the horseman, who, seeing them, urged his steed toward them at a swifter pace than before.

As the horse drew nearer, it was discovered to be of a coal-black color, and its rider to agree with it in this, for his skin was of the dusky olive tint, and his eyes of the deep, dark, peculiar hue and expression belonging to the sons of Spain. He was tall and powerfully built, his hair straight and black, and he carried, besides a couple of pistols and an elegant rifle slung to his back, a long dagger of elegant workmanship. His pants were of canvas, tucked into high riding-boots, his coat of a brown color, with bright brass buttons, while upon his head he wore a round straw hat with a black ribbon.

Again Ada shuddered.

"Who is it?" whispered the boy.

"It is Don Pedro—the wealthy Spanish planter, with whom my uncle wishes me to wed—or rather," she added, her brow crimsoning and her eyes flashing, "to whom he wishes to **SELL ME!**"

"He never do that!" cried Chick, firing; "not if you let me prevent!"

And the boy laid his hand upon his rifle.

"No, there must be no bloodshed!" she almost shrieked, detaining the ready hand.

Chick, therefore, folding his arms over his chest, quietly stood watching the horseman as he drew near, and contemptuously returning his haughty stare.

The moment he was within a few yards of the girl, the man took off his cap and bowed smilingly.

"Ho! ho! So the truant is found!" said he. "Your father sent me, or rather I volunteered to go, in search of you!"

"I had rather you had staid away, sir," answered the girl, spiritedly.

The Spaniard's eyes flashed fire, but he bit his lips and controlled himself.

"So this is the way you treat my kindness?" he said. "Here I have come, all the way from New Orleans, to invite you and your uncle to my plantation, thinking you would like the trip, and yet—"

"No more, sir, I beg. I see through your motives; I understand all. Now, mark my words, I will never be your wife!"

A strange pallor mingled with the dark olive tint of the Spaniard's face. His anger was great, but the exceeding beauty of the speaker smothered it, and fired him with a determination to obtain her at all hazards. From the glowing cheek, the dark, glossy curls, the heaving bosom, he glanced toward Chick, and in the latter's eyes read an admiration which it struck him was not disagreeably received by the girl.

"Who is this fellow?" he inquired, roughly.

"It is Chick," answered Ada, blushing.

"Chick, the *chicken*-hearted, I presume," exclaimed Pedro, laughing contemptuously.

A quick flash came to the boy's eyes; his whole frame trembled with passion. Still, he said not a word.

Pedro eyed him steadily, as if expecting some reply; but the youth maintained a steady silence.

"He looks marvelously like a red-skin," exclaimed Pedro. "If I should meet him alone on the prairie, I should be apt to shoot him like a dog."

"Stop, sir!" exclaimed Ada; "he is my friend, and I will not have him insulted."

"He is well named *Chick*," said the Spaniard, coolly, "seeing that he is protected by a *woman*."

Something in the boy's eyes seemed to convince the Spaniard that he was not quite such a coward as he had supposed

Anxious to pick a quarrel, and thus, if possible, rid himself of his rival, the horseman finally contrived to jostle the boy's head with his elbow, knocking off his cap. Still the youth said not a word, but quietly stooped and picked up the cap. As he did so, the Spaniard, remarking that he (the boy) was too near his horse and might get run over, dealt him a smart cut across the back with the end of his rein.

Calmly, to all appearance, the youth rose to his feet, except that the rings around his eyeballs seemed to expand.

"Come!" said the Spaniard, turning to Ada, "let me have the honor of escorting you to the house."

"I am able to go alone," she briefly answered, at the same time directing a half-pitying glance at Chick for the seeming lack of spirit he had shown.

So saying, she dashed off in the direction of the building with the speed of the wind.

The Spaniard, putting spurs to his horse, followed her, to see her enter the house before he could reach the door.

Ere he could dismount, he felt a hand upon his coat and glanced down, to behold Chick, who, at the same moment vaulted upon the horse's back behind him.

"What do you mean, boy?" the Spaniard sternly inquired.

As he spoke, he encountered those ringed eyeballs close to his face.

"I mean that **ONE OF US SHALL NEVER LEAVE THIS HORSE ALIVE!**"

Then raising his voice to its highest pitch, the lad uttered a wild Indian whoop, which, frightening the steed, sent the animal dashing past the building toward the bank of the White river, with the speed of a whirlwind.

The Spaniard having vainly endeavored to check the mad career of the horse, whirled himself round in his saddle and confronted the boy, who had caught him by the throat. Both were equally expert riders, perfectly at home in almost all positions upon the back of a flying steed, but the Spaniard, of course, had the advantage of the boy in point of strength. Grasping him by the wrist, he succeeded in disengaging the hand at his throat, while with his own disengaged one, he pulled a pistol from a holster, and pointed it at the youth's head.

The latter had no pistol, but his rifle, soon unsling from his back, answered him instead. Bracing the middle of the barrel against his hip, he pointed the muzzle at the Spaniard's temple, his hand grasping the trigger.

Both pulled trigger at once and both missed, each bullet flying over the head of him for whom it was intended.

The reason of this was that each of the contestants had knocked aside the other's weapon at the same moment; the Spaniard having let go the boy's wrist for that purpose.

With an oath, the Spaniard struck the lad over the head with the butt of his weapon, thus knocking him half-unconscious from the back of the horse, just as the animal gained the bank of the river. The fallen one struck the bank and thence rolled off into the water, the current of which carried him down-stream with the swiftness of a shot.

Meanwhile, the Spaniard, now alone, caught his rein, and his horse being checked by sinking into the soft soil of the bank, he finally succeeded in regaining control of him. Bending far over he then glanced down the stream, to behold the boy Chick, far away, endeavoring to climb the side of the bank.

Laughing derisively, he returned to Pierre's house, and entering, gave a brief account to his host of the adventure met with.

CHAPTER VII.

WINNIHAI AND THE TRAPPER.

At the moment when Pedro entered, the horse-stealer was sharply reproving his niece for the part she had acted.

"Stop that, friend Pierre!" exclaimed Pedro; "if I forgive her, I'm sure you should. I feel certain that she will never attempt any thing of the kind again!"

After he had related his adventure, he turned toward the girl with an air of triumph. "You perceive how easy it is to silence impertinent dogs of that young fellow's caliber."

Ada's eyes flashed.

"You are insulting!" she exclaimed. "I will not stay to listen to such a ruffian!"

And she swept out of the room.

The shadows of night now were gathering. Lamps were lighted by Pierre, and the two men sat by a table, to talk of their affairs over a bottle of good wine.

Meanwhile the wind rose howling, and the house shook, while through the windows glimpses of the moon now and then were caught as the planet became visible between masses of jagged, flying clouds.

"I tell you what it is, Pierre," said the Spaniard, "I must have that girl. Santa Maria! what a spirit she has got, and what pleasure it would be for me to tame it."

"As I have told you before, you may have her for the sum of four thousand dollars—not a cent less!"

"So you are still willing to sell her?"

"You must know—in fact I think I have told you—that the girl is no relative of mine. She was left to my care by a sick old negress, who stopped one day for shelter in this house, and died before morning. The woman told me before she expired, that Ada was the daughter of a southern planter, named Reynolds, who had died poor, without a relative in the world, leaving the child to her care. Her being nothing to me, therefore, I am willing to sell her!"

"Ada does not think you would sell her!"

"No; but I intend to undeceive her the moment you consent to buy her!"

"Four thousand dollars is a big sum to pay."

"You can afford it easily. If there should happen to be any trouble about the matter, I can say that I had reason to think the girl had negro blood in her veins, by her being left here by a black!"

This agreement was settled, when there was a knock at the door, and at Pierre's exclamation, "Come in!" Winnibah entered the apartment.

Her bright hair was blown all about her shoulders in wild confusion, and her large dark eyes flashed a peculiar light. She stood in the middle of the floor, half shrinking before the Spaniard's admiring glance.

"Santa Maria! what a beauty!" exclaimed the planter.

"Ay, but she can't compare to Ada!" whispered Pierre, uneasily fearful that the girl's charms might turn the man's frivolous nature from his original purpose.

"Don't be afraid!" exclaimed Pedro, "your blue-eyed beauties for me! I can *admire* dark ones, but prefer one whose complexion differs from mine!"

"Well!" cried Pierre, turning to the girl, "what *news*? Have you succeeded in bringing the Red Claw hyar?"

Even as he spoke, there was another knock at the door, which being opened, admitted the one-eyed trapper.

The latter's first glance was directed at Winnihah, his next at Pierre, and his third at the Spaniard, who half shrunk beneath the fire of that one eye.

"Well, Injun gal!" exclaimed Red Claw, as he stepped toward her, hat in hand, "I've come up with yer at last, and I hope t'other parties will excuse my abrupt intrusion—*thar's* them!"

"Certainly!" cried Pierre, with well dissembled hospitality; "you are perfectly welcome, Red Claw, perfectly!"

On hearing this name, the Spaniard surveyed, with no little curiosity, a man who had earned so wide a reputation for skill and courage. Envy and jealousy, however, were mingled with the respect he could not help feeling for the dauntless trapper. He longed to humble him, to prove his own superiority to this man by combat with him or otherwise; a feeling inherent in all breathing animals endowed like Pedro with plenty of brute courage.

"I'm sartinly glad to hear yer say I'm welcome, Pierre Le-man," answered Guy; "how's yer purty niece?"

"Well, thank you!"

"She's a good gal—*thar's* her! And now, Winnihah, I'm moughty glad to see yer, and hope yer warn't injured by them Crows, which I'd hev been willin' should hev walked over my *buddy* than hev harmed one of your purty ha'rs!"

The girl looked at him steadily. "Winnihah thanks the white man for saving her life, but he must not follow her any more."

"Yer hate me on account of my one eye!" cried Red Claw, putting a finger upon the lash of the orb; "*thar's* it!"

"Winnihah does not hate; but the white man had better go away from here!" she added, heedless of the glance and sign made to her by Pierre.

He readily perceived that the girl's gratitude to the trapper for having saved her life was beginning to tell. Fearful that she might overthrow his schemes, he turned toward her, asking her if she did not now wish to go and see Omeeno, in the other room.

She bowed acquiescence, when Pierre opening the door for her, bade her keep straight along the entry until she came to the first door upon her right, the one opening upon Omeeno's chamber.

When rid of the Indian maiden, Pierre turned toward the trapper, whose face was dark with jealousy and disappointment.

"She are very fond of Omeeno!" continued Pierre, not caring to soothe the feeling, "and she wants to nurse him!"

"So that infarnal red-skin are in this house?" cried Gay.

"Yes: the gal brought him hyar, and I couldn't refuse a request from her!"

Meanwhile Winnihah had just entered the chamber, when there was a knock at the door, on opening which, the Indian girl beheld Ada, with a tumbler of drink for the wounded man. Full of womanly pity, this gentle one, no matter what might be her own sufferings, could never forget those of others.

The Indian took the tumbler; then, fixing her dark eyes keenly upon the face of Ada, she said in a voice too low to be heard by the wounded Indian:

"The white bird is very good. The Indian girl is good, too, but in a different way. A little while ago, she would have taken the life of the great one-eye Red Claw! Now she has lost heart to do it, for the white brave saved her life! There are others, that still long for his blood: Omeeno and the white bird's *father*!"

"They can never capture him!"

"What! does not the white bird know that he now is in the house?"

"Here—in this house?"

"Yes—he followed Winnihah!" added the girl, softly; "he must not follow more!"

"I am glad you told me this," said Ada, "I have long known that my uncle did not like the trapper! Now I'm certain he will try to do him injury."

"The white bird must try to save him!"

Omeeno, who had previously been asleep, was now heard stirring in his bed, wherefore Winnihah made a sign to Ada to quit the apartment.

She did so, resolving in her own heart that she would do all in her power to prevent her uncle injuring the trapper—the father of the youth whom she loved, and for whom, since he had given such proof of courage, by his attack upon the Spaniard, she felt all that respect excited in the female bosom by masculine courage.

Guy Winton sat down, and the Spaniard at once began to converse with him.

"They tell me you never miss fire with the rifle?"

"No, I never hev yet, but I mought on a pinch. Sometimes thar's things happens to make a man's narves shaky in spite of him—*thar's it!*"

"Doubtless, although I can say that I never had such a feeling!"

"Thar's whar you and I differ. I war once deluded into drinkin' a quart o' whisky, which I must confess, made *my* narves shake some. I hev never touched the pesky stuff arter that!"

"Won't you hev a glass of wine?" inquired Pierre.

"No, thank yer. I've objured fire-water altogether—*thar's me!*"

"Will you stay here, all night?" asked the horse-thief, well-knowing that with Winnihah beneath the roof nothing could give Guy greater pleasure.

"Ef yer please."

An hour later he was shown to his chamber—one adjoining that from which Ada had, on a previous occasion, made her escape.

Divesting himself of his hunting-shirt, the trapper sat down on the side of the bed, previous to retiring, and fell

into a deep reverie, the foremost subject of which was beautiful Winnihah.

The fascination of this dusky siren had taken deep hold of his simple nature. In his whole experience, he had never seen her equal—and while her dark eyes seemed to burn into his soul, her voice, silver-toned like a bell, made his heart-strings vibrate even when she was absent.

“Ef it wasn’t fer this ’ere one eye!” he muttered remorsefully, shaking his head, and putting a finger upon the orb, “I mought awaken a *sympathetical concord* in that buzzum—*thar’s me!*”

Suddenly he thought he heard a light tap at the door. He listened intently, but the knock was not repeated. Glancing downward, however, he beheld something white, which had been thrust through the crack of the door.

He picked it up, to discover that it was a note, containing these words:

“There is a scheme here to take your life. You will be attacked by my uncle, or the Spaniard, to night. You had better leave the house. Be careful lest you are heard.

ADA LEMAN.”

This note he thrust into his pocket; then he filled his pipe and having lighted it again indulged in pleasant thoughts of Winnihah. Nevertheless, although reckless of life, when occasion required, Guy was not a man to throw that life away needlessly. He resolved to leave the house, after which he could hover in its vicinity, still keeping an eye upon the girl of his fancy. With this resolution, he rose to open the door, when he discovered that it was locked on the outside; a circumstance which it was evident Ada had not perceived, when she came to bring the note.

The effect upon the trapper of this discovery was not very great. He quietly shook his head, and having procured his rifle and looked to see that it was in good condition, he again sat down upon the bed with the weapon across his knees, his one eye turned indifferently toward the door.

A couple of hours had passed, when he heard a key turn in the lock, the door opened, and in came the horse-thief Pierre, with a dirk in one hand.

On seeing the trapper smoking, he showed some surprise, but quickly after composed his features.

"Won't yer sit down?" queried Guy, with sarcastic politeness, as he rose; "the honor of sich a visit, I don't think I shall ever forgit—*thar's* me!"

"I will be frank with you!" said Pierre; "I came here to take your life!"

"While I war asleep, possibly! Yer may save yourself the trouble, as I jist as lief die awake and take you along with me—*thar's* you!"

"How kind you are!" exclaimed Pierre with grim amazement, "and now listen to me. I have every reason to believe that you, more than any other man, suspect my business: for that reason, to avoid getting into trouble, I think I shall hev to take yer life; otherwise you may get my head in a noose!"

"I hev had my suspicions about you," answered Guy, "and hev intended to look into your affairs, and ef I found you guilty, to give you notice either to c'lar out from these parts or be hung!"

"Which you will never hev a chance to do. I've heard of your threats from many other trappers, met from time to time, and now ef you've any prayers to say, you'd better get to work. You mought holler and holler, but no person in this house would keer for you in the least, even ef they heard you!"

"Thunderation! kin yer think that I'd holler fur sich as you! I'd sooner be scalped and cut into hoss-meat—*thar's* me!"

Pierre glared upon the man like a panther; then, with a sudden spring, he pounced upon him, catching him by the throat with one hand, while lifting his dirk with the other.

The conduct of Red Claw at this crisis is well worthy of description. Holding to his rifle, he whirled it round, butt foremost, and drawing it back, dealt the horse-thief between the eyes a blow which nearly stunned him, causing him to let go his hold.

The man, screaming for assistance to his guest—the Spaniard Pedro—in another part of the house, roused the latter, who at once, armed with a revolver, came flying to his assistance.

Meanwhile Red Claw, throwing himself upon Pierre, had,

with his deer-hide, secured his arms, so that he now lay nearly helpless upon the floor.

As the Spaniard entered, pointing his revolver, the trapper sprung to his feet, fixing his glaring eye upon him.

"Hello ! so you hev come to help ? Blaze away, ef yer like, and we'll both go to eternity together—*thar's* us !"

So saying, he sprung for his rifle, which he had left lying upon the bed when he threw Pierre down. Before he could get to the weapon, however, the Spaniard discharged his pistol—the ball of which striking the oaken bed-post, passed through it, and being thus turned from its course, just grazed the trapper's neck.

"A miss are as good as a mile—*thar's* it !" exclaimed Red Claw, as he picked up his rifle, just as the Spaniard was about firing another shot.

Both pulled trigger at once ; but Red Claw's cap did not explode, while the Spaniard's bullet went flying up into the ceiling. At the same moment the voices of Winnihah and Ada were heard, the latter, who had just arrived upon the scene, having knocked up the Spaniard's arm.

"No—no—you shall not take his life !" she exclaimed. "Shame ! shame !"

She clung to the Spaniard, to prevent his firing another shot, at the same time begging Red Claw to leave the house.

"Of course, ef you require it, my purty one !" answered Guy ; "but I should like to hev this 'ere Don, which hev seemed so anxious to help my enemy, go out with me, so that we may fight out our scrimmage, and tharaway pervent any futur' ill-blood atween us—*thar's* me !"

"No, there shall be no fighting !" cried Ada, imperatively ; "I will not hear to it !"

"Beauty must be obeyed," said Pedro, bowing. "As to you, I am at your service any time," he added, turning to Red Claw.

"I'm always at yours. Ef we don't meet now, we may hev a chance in the futur'. I don't like to take human life when I kin help it, but ef I can't it's a different matter—*thar's* it !"

"I have nothing against you," said Pedro, except your

attack upon my host ; but, of course, as you seem to want to fight with me I shall not refuse."

"Thar's whar you are right; and now, this ere matter bein' settled to the saterfaction of all parties, I'll jist take a smoke and bid you all good night."

As he spoke, he walked up to Winnihah and held out his hand. She took it, and the trapper was delighted to feel a slight pressure.

"I'll see you again soon, purty Injun gal," he exclaimed, as he turned and quitted the room. Soon after, he left the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

BOUND TO THE STEED.

PIERRE being untied, sprung to his feet.

"I am sorry you permitted that scoundrel to escape!" he exclaimed. "I expect he'll soon hev me arrested now, and git my head into a noose!"

"Fear not," answered the Spaniard, as he glanced toward Winnihah; "here is one who will prevent his leaving this locality. Where she is there he will be also!"

"Leave us," said Pierre; "I wish to speak with Ada."

Winnihah had previously withdrawn; as to the Spaniard, he left the room immediately.

"You will hold yourself in readiness to start to-morrow morning."

"To start? Where?"

"To go with Pedro; *he has bought you!*"

"Bought me! What mean you? Remember, I am an American girl!"

"There's negro blood in your veins. Your mother was a mulatto!"

Having never previously heard this subject hinted at, Ada stood like one thunderstruck.

"This is false!"

"Before God, I believe it true!"

The girl's head drooped; then she looked up, her eyes flashing, her cheek glowing.

"No, no; there must be some mistake!"

"It is not so. Therefore I have sold you to Pedro for four thousand dollars." I hope you will make him a good—a good—servant!"

"SERVANT?"

The blue eyes fairly seemed to blaze, while the lip curled with scorn.

"Yes, a good servant."

"I, an AMERICAN GIRL, THE SERVANT OF A SPANIARD! I call Heaven to witness that I would sooner be tortured, racked from limb to limb, all my life!"

"This is nonsense. Pedro has bought you, and will take you with him to-morrow."

He said no more, but left the room, taking care to lock the door after him. There was no way of escape from this apartment, the window being too high from the ground.

"Servant," muttered Ada; "we shall see!"

Sleepless she sat upon the side of the bed all night long. When morning came, her door was opened by Pierre.

The man was cruel and heartless; still his conscience reproached him a little at the miserable aspect the girl presented.

"Bear up bravely," said he. "You will not find Pedro hard upon you. Had I supposed he would be, I would not have permitted him to take you."

Ada looked steadily in the man's face.

"You care nothing for me, or you would never have done this thing. Money is your God. Well, let it be so, and may our parting be forever."

"One thing you know, Ada: I am a poor man, and—"

"Go, leave me, and seek not to excuse your wretched conduct. Thank God, you are no relative of mine!"

"Come, have some breakfast before you go."

This she refused, saying she would not eat under the roof of a man who had sold her.

Pierre now seeming to lose patience, frowned and left the room, locking the door after him.

Half an hour later it was again opened, this time by Pierre accompanied by the Spaniard.

The latter, previously so courteous to the girl, now eyed her with the air of a master to whom she belonged by right of purchase.

"Come," said he, "it's time we were on the way. We have many a mile to go."

"I suppose you are aware to whom you speak?" cried Ada, spiritedly.

"I have bought you; you are mine," was the reply.

"AMERICANS ARE NEVER BOUGHT; AMERICANS CAN NOT BE SLAVES!" exclaimed the girl, drawing herself up, proudly.

"You must go with me!"

She did not move.

"Well, if you will not go, I will carry you!" cried the Spaniard, advancing toward her.

She shuddered at the idea of his touching her. As he approached, she gave Pierre a glance of contempt and loathing, and then walked straight forward out of the door.

"I will go sooner than be touched by your hands," she said, turning to Pedro.

"Wait until I get you on my plantation!" cried the latter, sneeringly; "then you will learn to like me!"

On reaching the outside door, Ada perceived that there were two horses standing in front of it, one being the Spaniard's and the other one of Pierre's, borrowed for the occasion.

The Spaniard motioned to the girl to mount the one belonging to Pierre, and as she obeyed, he quickly took a couple of turns with his lasso around the body of the girl, thus securing her to the steed.

Then, mounting his own, he seized the rein of the animal, and bidding adieu to Pierre, who, in his turn, shouted farewell to Ada, he put spurs to his horse, which started off at a brisk trot. Ada did not respond to the horse-thief, did not even act as if she noticed him, but kept her glance fixed straight ahead of her.

The two riders soon were upon the open prairie, which, in this part of the country, extended a distance of about three miles, when it was bounded by a thick piece of woods,

beyond which towered the summits of a range of lofty hills.

Several times the Spaniard spoke to Ada, who, however, would not respond to him either by look or word, but still kept her eyes turned straight ahead of her, as if unconscious of his presence.

About this time, Winnihah, in the chamber of the wounded Indian, was seated by his side, chanting to him, by his request, one of the songs which he loved. The man was much better than he had been, and hoped, in a few days, to be able to leave his couch. All the time he had been lying there ill, he had thought of little save the celebrated Red Claw, to effect whose capture he had come all the way from the country of his tribe, accompanied by the beautiful Winnihah.

Poor Winnihah! She loved not this man, and yet, while a young girl, too young to know her own heart, she had promised her dying mother that she would obey him in all things and marry him when he wished it.

Even as she sung, this melancholy thought forced itself upon her mind, and made her voice falter to the end of the chant.

When she ceased, Omeeno, half raising himself, fixed his keen eyes upon her face.

"Winnihah has changed!" he said; "she is not as she was. There is a cloud between her and Omeeno."

The girl turned aside her face, but spoke not.

Then Omeeno, clutching her by the wrist, cried, fiercely:

"Is the Osage bird deceiving her lover? Has she found another?"

At these words the girl trembled all over, while a vivid blush mantled upon her dusky cheeks. Then she turned her soft, black eyes, suffused with tears, upon the face of the prostrate Indian.

"Has not Winnihah told Omeeno that she could never love him? Can she help her feelings? The winds can not change their course, nor the stars come falling down upon the earth, unless the Manitou will it. So it is with Winnihah!"

"Winnihah has told Omeeno this; but there are other things he is afraid that she has not told him."

"There is nothing," answered the girl, faintly.

The Indian warrior eyed her steadily a few moments, then sunk back upon his pillow.

"It is well. Winnihah will learn to love Omeeno, when she marries him and sees what a brave husband she shall get. Until then, she must not seek another lover."

Winnihah meekly bowed her head, but her eyes were veiled by their long lashes, as if she feared to meet the eyes of the wounded man.

He continued, after a moment's silence:

"Let Winnihah go forth and again seek to draw Red Claw into the ambush of our warriors. Go and lure him into the country of our tribe, that he may be taken prisoner and tortured. Omeeno will soon be well, to come after and dance to the white man's yells at the death-pole!"

The girl bowed assent, but her cheeks blanched deathly pale.

"Go!" continued Omeeno; "there is no time to lose!"

Winnihah, withdrawing without a word, was soon upon the trail of the trapper, whom she found lying asleep in a small valley, about two hundred yards to the left of the house.

She stood surveying him with a peculiar light in her soft, black eyes, with the rosy morning sunshine streaming down through the branches of the trees upon her black hair.

All around her the birds sung upon the boughs of the trees, bright flowers waved at her feet, peeping from the green grass, and a little rivulet went singing over shining pebbles right in front of her.

It was a beautiful morning, and the heart of Winnihah, susceptible to nature as that of a bird, beat in her bosom with a pleasant feeling! No wonder, then, that the task she was to perform—that of luring the trapper into the hands of his enemies—was very distasteful to her.

The man had saved her life—had somehow won upon her heart by this no less than by his touching devotion, and she could not bear the idea of being the means of injuring a hair of his head.

Brought up to regard cruelty simply as a necessity—as something to be applauded rather than condemned, when

leagued with cunning, the maiden was surprised at her own sensations regarding the one-eyed trapper, the famed Red Claw, whose powerful arm had laid low many of the best of her tribe.

So there she stood, surveying the stalwart sleeper with feelings which, the longer she thought, became of a conflicting nature.

Finally she compressed her lips, and while her eyes flashed and her cheeks became ashy-pale, she muttered to herself:

"Yes, Winnihah must do it. She promised her dying mother that she would obey Omeeno, and she *must*!"

Even as she spoke, however, the trapper waked, and as he sprung to his feet and a flood of joy like sunshine crossed his face at beholding her, her spirit rebelled against doing him the meditated injury.

"Hello, purty one!" cried Guy, springing forward and extending his hand. "I war jist dreamin' of yer, an' hyar I open my one eye to see yer standin' right here before me—*thar's you!*"

The girl, blushing deeply, motioned him back, and then starting forward, glided over the prairie as lightly and swiftly as a spirit. On she went, the trapper following her, until she finally paused after proceeding about five miles, in the forest alluded to, sitting down to partake of her meal.

The trapper would have placed himself by her side if she had not motioned him back, when, happy to obey her slightest wish, he paused, watching her, while seated upon a grassy slope, she proceeded to partake of the contents of the haversack hanging at her side.

While this scene was taking place, Ada and her companion were ten miles beyond, riding along a narrow path of hard ground upon a long, winding elevation of land, about three feet in hight, crossing an extensive marsh. This marsh, right in the heart of the forest, was devoid of shrub or stump, and had the appearance of having once been a lake which had subsequently dried up.

Far beyond it, the land was seen, comparatively clear of woodland, rising in green ridges as it stretched away toward the hills.

"When we get yonder," said the Spaniard, pointing toward the ridges, "we will stop and have something to eat."

"I want nothing," replied Ada, in a voice choked by mingled grief and indignation, which had increased the further she went from the house which had once been her home.

"You *must* eat!" cried the Spaniard, "or you will grow thin!"

His fiery eyes blazed, as he glanced at Ada from head to foot, with an expression that disgusted her.

Meanwhile they were now riding, owing to the narrowness of the path, one before the other, the Spaniard leading, and still holding on to the rein of Ada's horse.

Thus proceeding, they had nearly gained the ridgy land, commencing at the end of the path, when the twang of a bow-string was heard, and the next moment an arrow struck the horse of the Spaniard, causing the animal to rear and pitch so violently that Pedro was obliged to let go of Ada's rein, in order to prevent the beast from plunging into the swamp.

Finding herself free for the moment, Ada, without stopping to ascertain whence the arrow had come, brought her steed back upon his haunches, and compelled the animal to perform a *pirouette*, thus turning him in the narrow path.

The next moment her familiar voice greeted the ear of the good steed, which at once dashed away, directed on the backward course.

Behind her, in pursuit, yet owing to the wound his courser had received, obliged to proceed slower than the girl, came the Spaniard, and behind him several savages, of the Crow tribe, who had just sprung up from one of the elevations of land, set up a dismal whoop, and followed, running with a speed nearly equal to that of the horses. The savages, three in number, were tall, stalwart fellows, nimble as deers, and strong as buffaloes; but it was soon evident that they could not overtake the horses at their present rate of speed. Equally useless seemed Pedro's pursuit of Ada, who, an excellent rider, and mounted upon a superb steed, was stretching away with the speed of the wind.

Seen from a distance proceeding along that narrow path,

the fair rider, with her long hair streaming back upon the wind, and her mantle flowing, seemed rather to skim through the air than to touch the ground. Turning to the left, when she had crossed the swamp, the girl soon was lost to the view of Pedro, who in a voice of rage, urged his lamed steed upon its course.

CHAPTER IX.

CAPTURED.

ADA continued on for about two hours, when she pulled rein in a deep valley, partially screened by the thick shrubbery upon its sides, to afford her weary steed the rest it needed.

She, too, almost worn out from maintaining the position in which she was lashed to the beast, needed rest; but as the cord binding her to the horse was fastened underneath the creature, she could not release herself.

Wishing that some friendly trapper would come along and with his knife sever her bonds, she sat watching the green shrubbery softly waving upon the bank of the valley, the purple flowers growing upon some of the bushes, nodding like miniature soldier caps.

While she sat thus, gazing pensively toward the brushwood, she suddenly thought she could see a pair of eyes peering at her from the shrubbery!

Soon, however, they vanished, when she concluded she might have been mistaken by the peculiar appearance of the leaves on the bushes, or by a couple of drops of dew, the position of which had afterward been changed. Soon, however, she again saw the apparition, and looking keenly she felt assured that she was not this time mistaken.

No, there they were—a pair of human eyes!

Ada uttered a low cry of mingled terror and surprise, when from the bushes, the hideous face of an Indian was thrust forth, painted for the war-path, and was followed by the whole of his body, gliding, snake-like, from the thick mass of leaves.

"Ugh!" he grunted, springing forward with a sudden bound and clutching the horse's rein. "Ugh! Pale-face girl ride very fast! Not escape Anee-o-ki, chief of the Crows!"

As he spoke, he uttered a noise like the croak of a raven, when from the bushes emerged two other savages. Although used to the sight of red-men, yet Ada screamed at the hideous aspect presented by one of these men, who wore a buffalo-horn sticking straight up from the top of his head.

"Ugh! stop! no noise! or the white bird's neck quick me cut off!" exclaimed Anee-o-ki, loosening his tomahawk.

At this threat, Ada remained silent, while the Indian who held her rein continued to lead her horse forward.

The savages kept on, not exchanging a word either among themselves or with the prisoner, until they had traveled about five miles in a southerly direction, when they came upon the camp of their tribe, situated close to a fork of the White river, which here went tumbling and roaring along for about half a mile, when a steep descent of rocks being encountered measuring at least thirty feet, the water here formed a cascade, descending upon jagged rocks below with the noise of thunder.

As the party entered the camp a number of girls and men came forth to take a look at the captive. Most of the females were very homely, but there were a few good-looking ones among them, which rule did not apply to the men, all of whom were the most hideous, uncouth objects that Ada had ever seen. They were dressed in divers costumes, some wearing buffalo-robcs, some bear-skins, some blankets, while a few had no robes at all excepting pieces of cloth sewed together, and attached to the shoulders, something in the form of an ancient toga.

Through the savage assemblage Ada was conducted to a tent in the center of the encampment, and a guard placed over her, while the horse was taken possession of by the chief, Anee-o-ki.

There was in the tent a small opening, through which the prisoner could see any person entering the encampment. For awhile those who came straggling in, one after the other,

were Indians of the Crow tribe, but at length a party appeared, having between them no less a personage than Winnihah.

She had no sooner entered than some of the braves immediately recognized her as the same person they had been in pursuit of on the previous day, and who had been saved by Red Claw!

There was great exultation in the camp as this news was circulated; the squaws and girls crowded round the beautiful captive, seeming anxious to tear her eyes out in their rage at charms so much exceeding their own. In fact, the men had great difficulty in preventing the women from injuring the girl, and when she was conducted to her prison—the same tent in which Ada was confined—they placed over her a strong guard, not so much to prevent her escape, which might have been done by a less number, as to keep the squaws away from her.

To explain how Winnihah came to be captured, it is necessary to state that after she had finished her meal, the Indian girl, changing her mind, in spite of the vow she had made to her dying mother, determined not to *obey Omeeno*, by luring Red Claw to his destruction.

Rising, she at once informed the trapper that she was bound to the country of her tribe, and that if he followed her he would certainly be taken prisoner.

"Never mind," Guy had answered, "I care not if I am taken, so that you let me follow you. The knowledge that you kin never be mine makes me keardless of life—*thar's me!*"

Winnihah, however, answered that she did not want the trapper to follow her, she would rather he would not, and, almost heart-broken, the man turned upon his heel and slowly retraced his way, now and then glancing back toward the beautiful vision.

"It are no use," muttered Red Claw; "ef I had two eyes, thar'd be hope of my producin' an effect upon that creatur', but I hev only one—*thar's it!*"

Meanwhile Winnihah, with sad, downcast eyes and slow gait, kept on toward the west her reverie making her less cautious than was her custom. It happened, therefore, that

she had not proceeded many miles, when, from behind a fallen tree, lying in her path, up rose half a dozen Crows and made her their prisoner, leading her to their camp as described.

At sight of Winnihah, a cry of recognition would have escaped Ada, but for a significant look from the other, plainly enjoining silence. In fact, the beautiful captive thought it best that the Crows should not know of the acquaintance between the two, as their ignorance, by permitting the prisoners to remain together, might result in some plan concocted for their escape.

The two, therefore, remained close to each other without exchanging a word, resolved to wait until darkness should better permit their doing so without observation.

When night came, however, the guard seemed to redouble their vigilance, so that the girls did not have the opportunity hoped for.

Both slept a little toward morning, not waking until the rude hand of one of the guard shook each upon the shoulder. They then beheld a crowd of squaws all gesticulating and conversing together in an excited manner.

"Come," said the man, who had waked them, "come—chief want to see!"

As they were leaving the tent the chief appeared.

"Been hold council!" he said, addressing Winnihah in broken English, "been hold council, and the maiden must die!"

"Winnihah is always ready," answered the girl, "she is one of the tribe who never fear to die!"

"Anee-o-la would have spared the Osage, but the squaws and maidens of his tribe wish that she may die, and the prophet Woo-kee-mo thinks it best."

The girl answered not a word, but directed a contemptuous glance toward the chattering women, and bowed.

"The white bird must die, too," continued the chief, glancing at the other prisoner.

Ada turned pale, but, compressing her lips, endeavored to hear the decree with calmness.

"Strike!" exclaimed Winnihah, "strike and kill quick!" pointing at her own beautiful head.

"It is not willed that she be killed with the tomahawk," answered the chief. "She shall know soon how she shall die!"

So saying, he motioned to the guard to conduct the girls back to the tent, after which he walked to the bank of the rushing stream, alongside of which an old canoe had just been drawn up. Near this stood a couple of Indians, provided with thongs of deer-hide, gazing with meaning glances toward the spot where the water formed the cataract by rushing down over the rocks.

"Is the canoe ready?"

"Yes," was the reply.

Winnihah, who partially understood the Crow tongue, could easily hear the question and response.

Instantly there flashed upon her mind a suspicion which was soon after confirmed. The whole Crow party, men, boys, squaws and all, belonging to the camp, soon came forth and crowded upon the bank of the stream. The cries and gesticulations of the women soon were put a stop to by the chief, after which he ordered several of the Indians to lead forth the two prisoners. They were conducted to the bank, made to enter the canoe there stationed; then hurled down and lashed side by side in the light vessel by means of the deer-thongs wound round them and secured under the craft.

Neither Ada nor Winnihah could longer doubt the mode of death chosen. They were to be set adrift in the canoe, which, carried along by the torrent, would soon dash them down the rapids, to descend which in this manner must certainly result in their destruction!

Pale, yet firm, the white girl, while trembling with horror at the fate in store for her, endeavored to nerve herself to meet her doom without any outward exhibition of her fears, while Winnihah, calm, impassible as a statue, showed not the slightest sign of agitation beyond a peculiar sparkling of the large, dark eyes.

Soon the canoe was loosened from the bank and the frail vessel whirled with lightning rapidity toward the cataract distant about half a mile.

From the dusky spectators of this scene, as the canoe

glided on, there broke forth a cry that of itself might have appalled the heart of a gentle girl like Ada Leman!

"God help us!" she murmured, "we are lost, lost!"

"Yes, lost!" gritted Winnihah, through her white teeth. "Good-by, tribe! good-by all!"

CHAPTER X.

THE CANOE.

WHEN Chick, after his encounter with the Spaniard, crawled out of the water, he sat down, and from the depths of his heart vowed revenge upon the man who had dealt thus harshly with him. Rising and walking along the bank, beneath the gathering shadows of night, he was about crossing the stream, when, suddenly, he thought he beheld a number of figures stealing along the opposite bank. Crouching in the shrubbery, he waited until they were opposite to him, when he discovered that, as he had suspected, they were a party of Indians—the Crows whose tracks had met his sight before he ascended the mountains. This party the youth surveyed as well as the darkness would permit, the number halting directly opposite to him and seeming to hold a whispered consultation.

Red Claw was not among them, a circumstance which reassured Chick, who knew that if his master had been captured, his great reputation would insure his being carried along by the Indians to their camp to suffer torture and death at the stake.

Not daring to move lest he should be discovered, the boy remained concealed, endeavoring to catch what was said; but the party spoke too low for him to hear them.

Once, in moving, he made a rustling which excited the suspicions of several of the savages. Soon, however, seeming to conclude that the noise had been caused by the wind, they sat down and continued their conversation.

Finally the youth noticed that they threw themselves flat

down on their bellies, remaining, with the exception of a whisper now and then, as still as death.

All night long they remained in this position, crouched in the thickest of the shrubbery where, save from the opposite bank, they could not have been seen by any passer-by, not within five yards of them.

Toward daylight, Chick was enabled to perceive that the house of Pierre was the object of their attention!

What did they mean to do? to attack and burn the building and massacre its inhabitants?

The boy's mind was full of anxiety on Ada's account; he must contrive to get to the building, and, if possible, warn its inmates of their danger.

Cautiously he drew himself along, not making the slightest noise, intending to move unobserved far up the stream, and then crossing, crouch in the long grass, draw himself to a strip of woodland not far off, and thence make a run to the house, which he could reach before the Crows, who must discover him the moment he left the covert.

As he had hoped to do, he managed to reach the woodland unseen by the Indians, whose eyes were turned toward the building.

He was about to start on the run toward the house, when he beheld a sight which riveted him to the spot with feelings of mingled astonishment and indignation. The spectacle was nothing less than that of Ada and the Spaniard, riding along in the manner which has been described in a previous chapter.

The boy was, in fact, so angry at seeing the girl tied to the horse upon which she sat, that he instinctively cocked his rifle and pointed it toward the Spaniard. The thought flashed upon him that the moment they heard the report, the Crows would know of his vicinity and capture him, thus rendering him powerless to assist the girl.

All thoughts of Pierre's building now passed away before the all-engrossing idea of Ada's unfortunate situation. Crouching low in the long grass, he crept along with the stealth and swiftness of a snake, endeavoring to keep the Spaniard and his companion in sight, and determined, if he could get near enough to make sure of his aim and of the Indians not

hearing the report of his piece, to shoot the man who was thus forcibly carrying away his beloved Ada.

On he went; but the Spaniard soon quickening his horse's pace, the boy was gradually left further and further behind.

Vainly he endeavored to keep the riders in sight; they were soon hid from his vision by distance and intervening trees, when, feeling perfectly miserable, the youth sat down, and pressing his cheek against the barrel of his piece, gave loose to the most harassing thoughts regarding the girl.

Finally he rose, and with the determination to either discover and rescue Ada or perish in the attempt, he kept on, following the tracks of the horses' feet. These led him deep into the forest, and he had nearly come in sight of the path leading across the marsh, when he heard the sound of horse's hoofs advancing rapidly, and glancing through the trees ahead, beheld Ada flying along on her horse with the speed of a whirlwind!

This was soon after the moment when, favored by the arrow, the girl contrived to escape from her captor.

Impetuous Chick waited not to see whether the latter followed her or not; but ran after her shouting, when, careless of his steps, down he went, his head striking the trunk of a fallen tree with a violence which for a while quite stunned him!

He regained his feet just in time to see the Spaniard upon his wounded steed go shooting past at the distance of several hundred yards.

Without hesitation he raised his rifle, took good aim and fired!

On went the Spaniard, however, uninjured.

Much disappointed, Chick was reloading, preparatory to following up the horse-trail, when he caught a glimpse through the shrubbery far away upon his left, of the three Indians, who had been concealed behind the ridge, and had run in pursuit of the escaping riders.

Hiding until they had passed and were out of sight, Chick, now more anxious than ever regarding Ada, continued on.

He had passed the valley in which the girl had been

captured, and come in sight of the camp of the Crows, when he felt a heavy hand upon his shoulder!

He turned, instinctively cocking his piece, when, to his joyful astonishment, he beheld his master, Red Claw!

"Hello!" rather whispered than spoke the one-eyed trapper. "I'm moughty glad to see you ag'in, and think this are sart'inly a lucky meetin'—*thar's it!*"

"Yes," answered Chick; and then, in a few words, he described his adventures since their parting. Red Claw likewise gave an account of his.

"We're raythur close to the red varmints!" whispered Guy "and it are best to be cautious. You and me are on an errand of the same natur'! I are arter none other than pretty Winnihah, which has been captured by the Crows—*thar's them!*"

He then went on to state that, shortly after Winnihah had left him, he had continued on, hoping that in time he might forget her. The further he advanced, however, widening the distance between them, the weaker became his resolution. Finally he had turned and retraced his way, resolved to still follow the beautiful Indian at all hazards.

He had not proceeded far into the woods on his new course, when he came upon other tracks mingled with those of Winnihah, which excited his suspicions of the girl's having been captured and led away! Determined to save the Indian, or perish, he had therefore followed up the trails to this point, which brought him in sight of the Crow camp, visible through openings in the shrubbery at a distance of several hundred yards.

"Thar must be somethin' done, at once," whispered the trapper. "Them gals will sart'inly be mastercreed, and though thar's a sart'inty of both going to heaven, still it's no reason why we shouldn't save 'em ef we kin—*thar's us!*"

"What do?" inquired Chick. "Can't go right into Crow camp!"

"I hev an idee," whispered the trapper, pointing toward the stream seen gleaming through the trees to the left of the camp. "Yer kin see a canoe thar, ef yer look sharp!"

"Yes, me see canoe!"

"We'l, we must git into that are, when night comes, and

see ef we can't contrive to git alongside the camp, find the gals and save thar lives by toting 'em off into the canoe !"

Chick shook his head. He was afraid the plan would not succeed ; still he was willing to try it.

Accordingly the two men remained under cover until dusk when they gradually commenced drawing themselves along toward the canoe. Soon they were alongside of it, and both entering it, discovered that it contained a heap of old matting, evidently of no use, and which perhaps would soon be thrown away by the Indians.

Seizing paddles, the two were about dipping them in the water, when Red Claw suddenly clutched his companion's arm.

"Hist ! Injuns !—*thar's them !*"

In fact, a party of Indians, not five rods away, were approaching the canoe !

"Down, Chick, down with us both !" whispered Red Claw.

Sinking down, and lying side by side, they drew the matting over them in such a way that they were completely screened.

A few minutes after, the Indians, reaching the bank, stood as if holding a consultation.

"What are the varmints saying ?" whispered the trapper, with his mouth close to the ear of the other. "You kin understand thar lingo."

"Can't hear what say yet," answered Chick.

Cautiously he raised his head, when he caught the words of one of the speakers.

"They are saying *better throw matting overboard !*" he whispered to the trapper.

"Hev yer rifle ready then !" whispered Guy.

"All ready !" gritted Chick, through his teeth.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GIRLS' PERIL.

WHIRLED on by the roaring current, the canoe containing the two girls drew nearer and nearer every moment to the fatal brink.

One of the eddies of the current had, meanwhile, drawn it within about two yards of the left bank, so that the occupants of the frail vessel, both of whom could swim, might easily have saved themselves by making a dash for the shore, had they not been bound to the thwarts, or cross-pieces, of the little vessel.

On the bank, astern of them, stood the savage spectators, all gesticulating and uttering cries of savage exultation at the fate in store for the two captives.

"Dogs!" said Winnihah through her teeth, "the Crows are all mean. They triumph over *women*; they run away from *men*!"

Ada made no response. She was lashed to the cross-piece in such a manner that she had a full view of the dreadful cataract, now less than a quarter of a mile ahead. She could see the foaming waters as they went tumbling and roaring over the rocks, and the sheeted spray as it was thrown high like flakes of snow from the stream below where the waters struck.

One last, farewell glance she would give at the beautiful green trees, the blue sky overhead, and the bright birds hopping about among the twigs; one last glance, and then close her eyes in preparation for her fate!

On went the canoe, and soon the savage shouts behind grew louder, as the frail vessel approached within forty yards of the perilous brink.

Ada had closed her eyes; a brief prayer, silent but heartfelt, rose from her bosom; she felt the canoe whirled forward still faster.

She opened her eyes and then uttered a cry of horror as

she saw the ghastly white waters staring her in the face scarcely twenty fathoms distant.

"Ah, God help us!" she murmured faintly.

"EF HE DON'T I WILL—THAR'S ME!" cried a voice of thunder, seeming to proceed from right under her.

At the same moment, up from the matting, which had hitherto concealed them, rose the two figures of Chick and Red Claw!

"Steady, gals, steady! and we'll hev yer safe in a jiffy!" cried Guy, as he and the boy severed in an instant the bonds of the women with their knives. "Now then, lad, look sharp and away we go—thar's us!" screamed Guy, as, seizing Winnihah in one arm, he sprung from the canoe almost to the shore near which it had so closely drifted.

Chick imitated his example with Ada, when both the swimmers, striking out twice, gained the bank, and clutching the soft earth, drew themselves thereon with their lovely burdens.

Behind them, as they did so, came the crack of rifles, followed by a savage yell, and several bullets whizzed over the heads of the party.

"Now, then, ef we look sharp," exclaimed Guy, "we kin soon make ourselves skeerce. It are indeed sweet to me to hev this 'ere lovely burden in my arms, even though my one eye hev deprived me of all my beyooty—*thar's it!*"

The four moved rapidly forward in the underbrush, keeping close to the bank of the stream, where the undergrowth was the densest. Both Winnihah and Ada now disengaged themselves from the arms of those who held them.

"Keep up good heart," exclaimed Chick. "Save in time."

The girl gave him a grateful glance, and a smile that made him thrill all over.

"The question ar', now, what that infarnal Spaniard war a-goin' to do with you, carryin' you off tied to a hoss, as Chick hyar hev described."

In few words, Ada explained all as they hurried on, exciting the indignation of her listeners. Then they, in their turn, explained how they came in the canoe.

"At one time," said Red Claw, "we thort the Indians war a-goin to throw the old stuff in the canoe overboard, which

would hev sartinly resulted in our bein' seen. Luckily, however, they arterwards changed their minds, and led the canoe to the camp as it war!"

Speeding on, the party soon reached an elevation on the bank of the stream, which afforded them a good view of the camp. There it was, plainly revealed, many of its occupants congregated at the side of the stream, watching the fugitives.

There were also a number of natives in a canoe, making for the opposite bank to pursue the runaways.

"Thar sartainly ar' no time to lose," remarked Red Claw. "We ar' in a state of uncomfortable *maximity* to them pesky red-skins—*thar's we!*"

"I hope we will not be overtaken. I would pray that I might be killed at once if I were!" said Ada, as the idea of again falling into the hands of the Spaniard Pedro recurred to her mind.

"I don't blame yer. The idea of makin' a slave of an American are like tryin' to make good sarsages of dorg's meat."

"Indian never be slave neither!" cried Winnihah, her eyes flashing.

"Fur from it! I should like to see the rascal that would make a slave of *you*, purty one! It are unposserble, although the *hearts* of t'others might be made slaves of yer attractions—*thar's them!*"

The party continued their way, and had soon left the elevation far behind.

Suddenly they came to a path, diverging from the bank.

"Good-by!" said the Indian girl, extending her hand to Red Claw.

"What! Yer ain't a-goin'?"

The manly voice trembled, and there was sadness in the one eye.

"Yes, better go. Winnihah can never be any thing to the white man."

Her soft, dark eyes beamed upon him, as she spoke, with a kind but firm expression.

"No—no! Why, thunderation! yer must not think of goin' yet!"

"Winnihah better go."

Now she cast down her eyes, and her voice trembled.

"Yer better go along with us, jist a little ways further; that are the best plan; come."

"No; Winnihah—"

She paused, for at that moment the sound of horses' feet were heard, coming down the path.

The whole party crouched down with the exception of Red Claw, who at once ran along the path in a crouching position, to ascertain the character of the new-comers. Having reached a thick clump of shrubbery near a turn in the path, he there concealed himself, and glancing down the narrow way, beheld, at a distance of several hundreds of yards, a couple of horsemen, whom he at once recognized as Pierre Leman and the Spaniard Pedro. Behind them, on foot, came a dozen or more savages of the tribe, which the two had evidently brought with them to answer the purposes of a body-guard and to help them find Ada, who, it was evident, was the object which had drawn them in this direction. Such, in fact, was the case; the Spaniard, on losing Ada, having finally ridden back to Pierre's and informed him of what had taken place.

By a singular contradiction of character, Pierre, while cruel enough to sell the girl for money, felt, besides the wish to obtain her and restore her to the Spaniard, much real anxiety with regard to her falling into the hands of the savages.

It happened that when Pedro came back to the house, he found there a party of warlike Kickapoos, with whom Pierre was negotiating regarding some stolen horses. It was probably this party that saved his house from being attacked and burned by the Crows, who had remained watching the building, long after Winnihah and Ada had left it.

When Pedro told what had happened, the horse-thief made an agreement with the Kickapoos to accompany him, and with this addition, at once started in search of Ada. Following up the trail, as far as the valley, the party had there lost it, the Crows having taken care to conceal it, after the prisoners had been brought into the camp.

Finally they (the hunters) had crossed the stream and kept along at right-angles with it, in a north-east direction.

Finding no trace in this direction, they on the following morning retraced their way toward the stream along the path from which Red Claw, as shown, discovered them.

The trapper at once divining their errand, hurried back, vainly attempting to hide his joy, as he now informed Winnihah that she would have to either follow the course *he* intended to take, or fall into the hands of the Kickapoos, who, without doubt, being enemies to her tribe, would not be prevailed upon, even by Pierre, to release her.

A close observer would not have seen much sorrow in the eyes of beautiful Winnihah at the trapper's proposition.

The party hurried on along the bank, and in a short time came to a spot where the stream was shallow enough to cross.

"Now, then, ef we could only cross!" said Red Claw. "we mought put them what follers us ontirely on the wrong scent—*thar's it!*"

"Why not cross? I am not afraid!" remarked Ada, glancing toward Chick, who returned the look with one of tender admiration.

"Yer not afraid I know; but ef we try it, we mought be seen by the Injuns up-stream!"

"Yes; perhaps Injuns quick see," remarked Chick.

He and his master held a moment's consultation, after which it was decided that Chick should go into the stream and take a look unseen, if that were possible.

This the boy did. Screening himself behind a clump of bushes growing from the bank of the stream, he glanced up along the surface, to see, as he feared would be the case, a party of Indians keeping watch from a rock in the water just above the falls.

He returned with this information, when Red Claw concluded to move further down before attempting to pass over.

"Why do you want to cross at all?" inquired Ada.

The sound of horses' feet proceeding along the bank, might have partly served as an answer to this question. It was the trapper's purpose, which he now frankly stated, to cross, in order to puzzle and probaby turn aside those who were following them. Seeing a sudden halt indicated by the tracks of their feet and then those same tracks leading straight into

the water, they would naturally conclude that Ada had parted from her companions, crossed over on the other side and kept on; it being the intention of Guy to have Ada proceed a short distance after crossing and then walk back *in her tracks* to the stream, where the rest of the party would wait for her. All would then wade down-stream some distance, after which they would return to land on *the same* side as that which they had quitted.

This design was carried into effect the moment the fugitives reached a point secure from the observation of the Indians on the rock.

After returning to the shore, Red Claw remarked that he thought his plan would succeed admirably. Meanwhile he thought they had better keep moving until night, and then halt for rest, preparatory to continuing their journey toward the nearest settlement, twenty miles distant.

"Once thar," said the trapper, "we kin hev a good time, and you two women refresh yerselves at the first-class hotel kept by Simon Wigston—*thar's him!*"

This "first-class hotel" of which Red Claw spoke, was little more than a log-house, larger than any of the buildings around it, in which Simon Wigston, an old settler, sold "fire-water," tobacco, skins, and such provisions as roasted "buffeler" meat, fish, herrings, deer's meat, and fresh bread.

The apartments usually furnished to those desiring a night's lodging were partitioned off in a convenient manner with calico curtains, lumber piled up almost to the ceiling, and other contrivances, from what was termed the tavern.

"I shall be glad to get to some place where the laws will protect an American girl from being sold as a slave!"

"It are outrageous," said Guy; "enny person kin see that."

"Glad get to settlement, too," said Winnihah, "then be close to my tribe, which me soon reach!"

"So you are determined to leave us?"

"Yes, better go," answered Winnihah.

Her face and voice were calm, but there was a peculiar softening of the black eyes.

Guy heaved a deep sigh, and the party continued rapidly on their way, until almost evening, when the trapper, who

knew the country well, turned into a side path, which finally led the fugitives to a hollow on the left side of the stream.

Here Guy paused.

"Now, then," said he, "I hev a proposition to make. Jist you all come hyar, and stand on the edge of this hollow!"

Wondering as to his intention, his companions obeyed.

"Now, then, kin yer see any thing pekooliar about this place?"

All except Chick, who seemed to know his master's purpose, answered in the negative. The hollow seemed like all places of its description, being about six feet in length, as many broad, and containing a low growth of shrubbery.

"Thar's as it should be; and now I hev to tell yer that thar are something pekooliar about the place—thar's it!"

So saying, the trapper, advancing into the hollow, pushed aside by main strength a large stone, disclosing an opening in an underground rock, leading downward.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAVE.

"COME and take a look!" continued Guy, to those watching him.

Ada and Winnihah, with woman's natural curiosity, advanced first, and peered into the opening. This led, as mentioned, in a slanting direction, and was just large enough to admit any person crawling on hands and knees.

"What is there underneath?" inquired Ada.

"A kind of a rough chamber or hollow, big enough to hold ten people. The fact are jist this. I war once trappin' in this locality, when I came upon the hole, which I examined, to my saterfaction discoverin' the chamber, which I thort would be a good place for me to hide my skins in, especially as thar are rocky shelves in it, ef I wanted to go further on. Tharfore, I jist s'arched until I found this stone, which I put

over the place, so that no person but myself could find it!"

"Good place to hide!" exclaimed Winnihah.

"Yes, it are. But, before enterin', we must hide our tracks by coverin' 'em with leaves, then git into the water and wade that way to the opening, which, you kin see, are within half a foot of the bank's edge!"

"I should think the water would be apt to get into the hollow," remarked Ada.

"Sometimes it do," answered Guy, "but not often; only when thar's an unusual risin' of the stream, which ain't apt to happen except in a storm—*thar's it!*"

"If it storms, then, we must go right out!" said Ada.

"Sartin; it won't storm before mornin', at enny rate!" he added, glancing up toward the sky. "So come, let's git in, as thar are no time to lose."

Accordingly, the whole party, after having concealed their tracks by means of leaves arranged with artful carelessness, prepared to enter the hollow, Guy and Chick preventing Ada and Winnihah from wetting their feet by carrying the two girls in their arms.

Guy went first, and the rest soon after followed.

In the royal chamber in which they now found themselves, was a floor space of fully eight feet square. The walls were of hard rock, down whose sides trickled, here and there, water which sunk into the soft sand-holes, which seemed to abound along the sides of this underground chamber.

As soon as all were in the place, Guy, advancing to the entrance with Chick, blocked it up with the boy's assistance, using for this purpose the stone previously mentioned.

"Hyar we are, safe and sound," said Guy, when he returned; "the darkness are the only inconvenience we'll hev to contend with!"

From his haversack he now drew forth some bear's meat and bread, which he distributed to his companions.

Ada could not help feeling somewhat amused at the trapper's awkward attempts to give out the food in the darkness.

When the meal was finished, Guy, taking off the bear-skin robe, spread it upon the ground.

"Now, gals, I hev prepared a couch, which I hope under

the circumstances may prove satisfactory. You'd better lay down and go to sleep."

The trapper's natural blunt but well-meant frankness made amends for all he said, so that, after demurring a little at depriving him of his bear skin, Ada was content to lie down and go to sleep, especially as the darkness would hide her from those present.

Winnihah, who knew nothing of such fine modesty, threw herself down with the readiness of an Indian girl, and soon sunk into a refreshing slumber.

Worn out with their late exertions, the two girls slept until morning, when, opening their eyes, they were surprised to see a stream of light falling into the rocky chamber.

Leaning against the wall opposite to them, stood Guy, his one eye fixed upon Winnihah with an expression of all-absorbing tenderness. The girl blushed as she sprung to her feet simultaneously with Ada.

"Glad yer slept so well," remarked the trapper. "It'll do yer a powerful sight of good—thar's it!"

"Where is Chick?" inquired Ada, unthinkingly speaking with great anxiety.

"He are all right, miss," was the reply; "jist gone to *re-connooter*."

"You do not think the Indians are near us?"

"I don't know; but hyar comes Chick now, to give an account of himself."

In fact, Chick now was seen crawling through the entrance of the cave. His Indian face showed no excitement; still Winnihah, skilled in reading the faces of red-men, could perceive that he had made *some* discovery.

What this was, however, she could not determine until he had whispered to the trapper, who then said:

"Gals, don't be skeered, but thar's Injuns prowlin' round. In fact, they seem to suspect that we are somewhar in this locality, and hev cut us off on both sides of the stream. Thar's only one way to do: to stay whar we are, and let them wait. They'll leave arter a while."

"Which Indians are they?" queried Ada, anxiously; "the Crows or the others?"

"Both," answered Chick. "Don't know—think Pierre

Lemar make some peace agreement with the two. Seem good friends enough now."

"Peace are a good thing in its place," said Guy, "but under present circumstances, it are *bad* for *we*—thar's *us*!"

Motioning to Chick, the two proceeded to the opening, which they at once closed up, after which Guy again distributed the contents of his haversack.

When the meal was finished, he signified his intention to go soon and again "*reconnooter*."

"Hark! what is that?" inquired Ada, as a rushing sound was heard outside of the cave.

"A storm," answered Chick; "it was gathering when me went out."

"Then our cave will be flooded."

"We kin leave it before that. You kin make up yer mind on that p'int," said Red Claw.

An hour passed, when the trapper, removing the stone cautiously, peered out. Discovering no sign of a foe lurking near, he pushed aside the stone, and emerging from the hollow, hurried stealthily along on hands and knees. He had not proceeded more than fifty yards, when he perceived three Indians standing a few yards off, under a tree.

This sight was enough; it would not yet do to leave the cave, toward which the man now retraced his way with all possible dispatch.

Meanwhile the wind was blowing with great fury, bending the trees almost double, and sending waves of dark clouds careering through the sky in ragged fragments. The trapper, when he reached the entrance of the cavern, glanced anxiously toward the stream, whose waters now were bubbling and boiling as they dashed roaring upon their course. He did not like the looks of the water, which was in many places beating tumultuously up against the banks. Just as he drew his head into the entrance, and was about closing the opening, down came the rain rushing with the roar of thunder, and beating the earth with the din of a hundred huge base drums.

"The stream will swell to a torrent," said Ada; "had we not better now leave our retreat?"

"Not yet," answered Red Claw. "It 'ud be risky bizness

secin' as we mought be caught and lose our ha'r by the Injuns—thar's them !”

“What's the difference whether we are scalped or drowned ?” inquired Ada, half smiling.

“A pesky sight, miss. Drownin' are an easy and romantic bizness, sometimes adopted by them as hev been luv-stricken ; wharas you never heerd of any feller scalpin' himself out of luv—eh, Winnihah ?”

“No, never ! Drown, hang, go crazy—no scalp !” answered the girl, gravely.

Meanwhile the roaring of the storm and beating of the waters grew louder.

Guy and Chick exchanged uneasy glances.

“Hark ! what is that ?” queried Ada, when another hour had passed.

The noise referred to was a roaring like the smothered voice of a lion.

Guy and Chick exchanged glances ; then the former, advancing to the entrance, pushed aside the stone and peered forth. At first he could see nothing, but, by removing the stone a little more, he beheld the waters of the stream, now fairly swollen to a torrent, rushing along with overpowering velocity. Soon they must overflow the banks, with which they were already on a level ; it was therefore necessary to leave the cave at once. Stating this, Guy returned, and the whole party were moving toward the entrance, when, with the din of thunder, the expected catastrophe took place.

Pouring over the bank, part of which it had washed away, the water came rushing into the hollow with terrific din, and with a force and impetuosity which prevented those in the cave from making their way out.

“We are sartainly in a precarious situation,” remarked Guy, “thar's only one thing for us to do now, which are to scale the side of the cave, and get up as far towards the top as we kin !”

“But the water will soon get up to *us* !” exclaimed Ada.

“I don't think so ; I war once caught hyar in jist sich a scrape, when I saved myself by climbin' up close to the roof. Ef I could do so *then*, I don't see what's to prevent our doin the same *now*—thar's *we* !”

"Water may come higher this time," remarked Winnihah.

"It mought; then again it mought not. Thar kin be no harm in tryin' at any rate!"

Accordingly, retracing their way to the rocky chamber, Guy and Chick proceeded to assist Winnihah and Ada up the sides of the cavern onto the projecting shelf where the trapper had, in former times, been accustomed to lay his skins. Here the two girls could easily support themselves, the shelf being almost a foot in width. There was no time to lose, as the water, now advancing with great rapidity, was up to the knees of the two men. Soon they were alongside the girls, Chick next to Ada and Guy next to Winnihah, and the rifles safely stowed in the crevices above, to preserve them for instant use.

The former was much agitated by her perilous situation, but the other preserved all the natural stoicism of the Indian. Meanwhile, roaring, gurgling and hissing, the water continued pouring into the cave, rising higher every moment.

"Keep up brave heart!" whispered Chick to Ada; "the water, perhaps, will not reach us."

"I don't know! See how fast, how steadily, it continues to rise"—pointing toward the foam upon the surface of the current.

Up—up—still up higher and higher. Finally it was almost on a level with the shelf!

"It will soon begin to go down now," exclaimed Guy.

He was mistaken; the water steadily continued rising, and soon the party felt it wetting their lower limbs.

A minute later they were obliged to stand up in a stooping position, bent under the roof, the water by this time having overflowed their ankles.

The trapper now began to be anxious. Still he would **not** make known his feelings to the women.

The party were now shrunk close together, when, even in this perilous moment, Chick experienced a sensation similar to what he had felt all along while in Winnihah's company, on finding himself so close to the girl. The feeling was one for which he could not account: such as he had not previously felt toward any other woman—entirely different from that caused by Ada's presence. Had Winnihah been similarly influenced?

The youth could not tell, positively, but he had frequently noticed a peculiar expression in her eye whenever their glances met, which inclined him to believe that she too had for *him* the same peculiar feeling.

The water in the cave still kept rising; soon it was above Guy's hips.

"We will perish!" cried Ada. "We must perish! God have mercy on us!"

"Pale-face girl can not bear death," exclaimed Winnihah, in a voice expressing half contempt, half pity.

The fair one answered not, but clung close to Chick, endeavoring to muster the same calm fortitude shown by the Indian girl.

It was no use. The white girl, perhaps evincing more fortitude on some occasions than the daughter of the red-man, could not feel her stoicism under circumstances like the present.

On came the water, and soon its cold touch was upon the girl's shoulder. She uttered a half-stifled scream, while Chick vainly endeavored to soothe her fears.

Meanwhile the trapper addressed himself to Winnihah.

"Ah, my beyooty! It are too bad fur you to die arter escapin' from that infarnal canoe. I'm afeard we'll all hev to go—*thar's it!*"

It seemed as if his prophecy must come true. For the water continued rising!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAVE STRUGGLE.

"It are probably all up with us!" cried Red Claw, "which bein' the case, we'd better die game than t'other ways—*thar's we!* Another minit, and we'll hev to swim fur it!" he cried.

Even as he spoke, Chick clutched him by the shoulder and whispered in his ear:

"The water begin to go down!"

Soon the truth of this became evident. The storm had abated, the torrent was diminished in strength and power, and was beginning to settle down.

Great was Ada's joy at this: she clapped her hands and from her heart thanked Heaven for this narrow escape.

"We kin soon ventur' forth now!" exclaimed Guy, "seein' as the water is a-goin' down so fast!"

The party could do so, an hour later, the water by that time having receded back to the stream, leaving only a foot's depth in the cave.

Guy and Chick helped the girls down, after which the former, making his way to the mouth of the opening, peered forth. The storm had ceased, the sun was pouring flashes of light upon the fresh, wet leaves, and the birds were singing on bough and twig.

Just as Guy pushed his head through the opening, he beheld about fifty yards beyond, the head of a horseman, whose side face was turned toward him!

Instantly he drew back; but even as he did so the man half turned his face toward him!

Now then, the trapper was not certain whether he had been seen or not by the horseman, who was none other than Pierre Leman!

Keenly watching the fellow, he endeavored to ascertain if the man had discovered him. The behavior of the horseman, who still sat coolly upon his steed, glancing away from the cave, would seem to imply that he had *not*; nevertheless there was a flushing up of the face, which excited the suspicions of the one-eyed trapper, skilled in reading the faces of the kinds of men with whom he was brought into contact! Of course the shadow in which he lay must screen the observer from the horseman, who soon after made a sign to some person or persons not far off.

At this the suspicions of the trapper were confirmed! *he had been seen*, and there was an attack to be made on the cave!

Still Guy waited for *further* confirmation, which was soon given him by the conduct of the horseman, who, joined by

the Spaniard, now slowly approached the mouth of the cave.

Hastening back, the trapper, in a whisper, informed Chick of his discovery, when the two men at once examined their rifles to make sure that they were in order. The pieces were found all right.

"Now," whispered the trapper, "don't yer go to bein' in too much of a hurry, Chick, but jist you lay down here, by me, and wait until I give the signal to fire!"

Chick promising compliance, the trapper, followed by the boy, crept forward toward the entrance.

Meanwhile the watchers saw the two horsemen now approaching, and behind them, looming up above the shrubbery, the heads, and faces of at least half a dozen Indians.

"Ef I hain't mistaken, them Indians hev had an addition, fur I see three which look like Winnihah's tribe!"

Chick was also of this opinion, the signs being two gray eagle-feathers, sticking up from the head of each of the three alluded to, crossing as they waved.

"Yes, I would know them wharever I mought see them!" continued Guy, "fur I've had many a fight with the red-skins of that tribe, which more'n enny other hev tried to entrap me—thar's them!"

Meanwhile the horsemen continued to approach.

"There," said Pierre, in a low voice, "there is the cave. I'm quite sure I saw a shadowy figure drawing back into it, just as I looked!"

"It might be one of our own party!" suggested the Spaniard.

"If it is, he will answer us," said Leman. "Although it may hev been no human being at all but only a cougar or some other wild animal!"

"I'll soon find out!" cried Pedro, drawing his sword. So saying, he advanced close to the entrance of the cave, shouting, "Who's there?"

There being no response, Pedro remarked that what his companion had seen must either have been a human being or a wild animal.

He was about crawling through the opening to ascertain which, when Pierre laid a hand on his arm as an Indian

figure suddenly rushed from the shrubbery, shouting, "Me go ! me go !"

It was the Indian Omeeno, who, having sufficiently recovered from his wound to walk about, had joined the searching party.

"Hold !" whispered Pierre to the Spaniard, "and let this fellow go. His life is not worth as much as yours. Besides, these fellows, you know, take great delight in capturing a prisoner single-handed !"

It was some time, however, ere the horse-thief could prevail upon the Spaniard to relinquish his design of being the first to enter the cavern.

As Pedro stepped aside, the Indian, loosening his tomahawk, crept forward through the entrance of the cave as cautiously as a snake.

"Let me strike !" whispered Chick to Guy.

"No ; that chap belongs to me," muttered Guy. "You jist stand by to cover me and don't interfere. I've a grudge ag'in' this Injun and must settle the matter myself—thar's me !"

So saying he drew himself along the side of the cavern ; then suddenly sprung upon the red-skin, grasping him so firmly by the throat that the intruder could not utter a sound.

Meanwhile, as mentioned, those without, owing to the darkness in the cave, could not see what was going on, while those in the chamber—the two girls, now again perched upon the shelf—could only make out the outlines of the three in the narrow passage, their forms screening the entrance so as to obscure the light.

The next moment Guy had the fellow down, a knee upon his breast and his hunting-knife drawn.

The Indian also had contrived to draw his knife ; in fact it was in his hand before Guy's had left his belt, and with it he aimed a furious blow at the trapper's heart.

Had not the latter caught his wrist, his days must have been numbered, for the blow was a quick and powerful one, and must have sent the knife home to the hilt.

Determined to now put an end to the combat, as soon as possible, Guy drove his knife to the hilt in the heart of Omeeno ! the Indian fell upon his back and expired without a groan, his dull eyes turned up toward the roof the cave.

Meanwhile those without, listening intently, had not failed to hear the noise of the combat.

"Follow me!" gritted the Spaniard through his set teeth; "there is something going on in that cave!"

Crawling through the opening, he was immediately confronted by Chick, who, clutching him by the throat, exclaimed, "Die, black dog! die!"

"Not so fast!" answered Pedro.

He avoided the dagger-thrust by dodging the gleaming steel, whose flash was plainly discernible in the dim light; then with a single effort, hurled the boy down, and aimed a pistol at his head.

"No noise; but tell me at once who is in here beside yourself!"

The crash of a rifle rung through the place, and down went the Spaniard with a bullet from Guy's rifle through his brain!

The echoes had scarcely died away, when into the cave came Pierre, leading four Indians, who soon effected the capture of the trapper and Chick.

Ada and Winnihah were also soon discovered and taken.

The moment the prisoners were led without, Winnihah was a free girl. The four Indians of her tribe, who belonged to the searching party, saw and recognized her at once.

"Hev yer way about *her*!" cried Pierre, when the red-men surrounded him and insisted upon her freedom; "but I'd advise yer not to let the Crows on t'other side of the stream get sight of her, or you may hev to fight to keep her!"

A few minutes later, the dead bodies of Omeeno and the Spaniard were drawn forth.

At sight of the former, the eyes of Winnihah's people blazed like coals of fire, and threats of terrible vengeance were uttered against the trapper and Chick.

As to Winnihah, she gave one glance full of pity at the dead Indian and shrugged her shoulders; but, beyond this, she showed little emotion.

In fact, there was no reason that she should do so; the man having always behaved toward her like a tyrant on account of the promise she had made her mother; a promise which bound her to him while he lived.

Pierre now brought several Indians to convey the Spaniard's body into the woods and bury it. "As to you," continued the horse-thief, glancing toward Ada, "you shall come home with *me*!"

"RATHER SURRENDER ME TO THE CROW INDIANS!" cried the white girl, spiritedly.

"No, you shall go with me!" repeated Pierre.

"And I say she shall *not*—thar's *me*!" exclaimed Guy.

"A pretty time for you to have your say," remarked the thief, sneeringly. "How kin you *prevent* her goin', old hoss?"

"I kin do it through another!"

"No you can't!"

"Yes I kin. WINNIHAH!"

The girl stepped forward.

"You know how this man has treated the white girl—don't yer let him hev her—thar's *you*!"

The Indian beauty directed a half-scornful glance at the white maiden, who had excited her contempt by being so terrified when the cave was full of water.

"If she not such coward me not let Pierre take!" she cried.

Quietly Ada returned the half-scornful glance; then, looking the dusky belle full in the face, she said, in calm, unfaltering voice:

"I ask not from you the favor of *saving* my life; but I do ask of you *one* favor, which is, that your warriors may give me up to their enemies, the Crows, rather than that Pierre should take me!"

"Good!" exclaimed Winnihah, admiration now lighting her features. "That is good! Braver girl than me thought. No! Pierre shall not take! Me will save life!"

"Remember!" cried Pierre, sternly, after Winnihah had made known her wishes to the Indians of her tribe, "remember you promised to follow me!"

"Promise until find runaways!" said an old man, evidently a chief, "no longer!"

"Thar's whar you are right!" exclaimed Guy; "the promise ain't bindin' beyond the present!"

Even as he spoke, the Indians, advancing, took possession of Ada.

Vainly Pierre endeavored to persuade them to relinquish her; two words from the beautiful Winnihah were to them worth more than a hundred from the horse-thief.

Finding that he was unable to persuade the red-men, he turned his horse's head and dashed off!

"Thar goes as big a scoundrel as thar are on the face of the 'arth!" muttered Guy, as the horseman vanished among the trees.

Meanwhile, the moment Chick perceived that Ada was to be well treated, he thanked Winnihah in a voice of fervent gratitude for her kindness.

"Stop talk!" exclaimed one of his captors, dealing him a blow with a stick.

The fellow would have struck again if Winnihah had not interfered.

Quietly she expostulated, the man answering by pointing toward the cold form of Omeeno, which some of the Indians had picked up between them, to convey to the country of their tribe, distant about six miles.

"Must not strike, for all that," said Winnihah.

The others heard her and looked surprised, not being able to imagine why she should take the part of one of those who had killed Omeeno.

Winnihah could not have explained this herself. There was about the boy Chick, something which, as already stated, impressed her in a peculiar manner. The impression can only be compared to that which one feels on seeing a face that one has seen before, yet can not imagine when nor where.

Again and again did the two exchange stealthy glances, each reading in the eyes of the other the effect produced.

The glances thus exchanged excited the jealousy of the trapper, who, instead of thinking of the fate in store for him, was occupied with thoughts of the seeming interest that Winnihah and Chick took in each other!

"It's the good looks of the lad—that's what it is!" he half muttered to himself. "I war a fool to let that boy go with me, seein' as thar's a great contrast between him *thar* and me *hyar*!" putting a hand upon the one eye.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

By noon, the party arrived at the Indian camp.

The body of Omeeno was buried with the usual ceremonies soon after, when a council was held in the chief's lodge, as to the fate of the prisoners.

The council was of long duration, the Indians not seeming able to hit upon means of torture severe enough to avenge the death of Omeeno.

Finally, however, they came to a decision.

The two prisoners should be stripped to the waist, and after being beaten and pricked with sharp sticks, should be tied up to the trunk of a tree by the hair of their heads and a rope loosely secured under the armpits.

Thus suspended, a fire should be kindled beneath them and both be *slowly* roasted alive!

As preparatory torture, this information was at once conveyed to the prisoners, who, however, heard the barbarous tidings with the utmost composure.

Soon after, they were led forth to the place of execution—a tree with a branch projecting about fifteen feet above the ground, where the fagots, ready to be lighted, were already piled. As the two were led to this locality, nearly all the inhabitants of the camp, young and old, came forth to witness what was to take place. There were squaws, maidens, young and old men, and toothless hags, not one of whom showed any evidence of pity, but rather an expression of savage delight and exultation.

There was the mother of Omeeno: an old squaw of sixty, who, glaring upon Guy with an expression of demoniacal fury, kept thrusting a sharp stick into his face, thus inflicting innumerable wounds. She was about treating Chick in the same manner, when the voice of Guy was heard.

"Hold, thar! don't ye hurt that lad! It was I, not *he*, that shot Omeeno—*thar's it!*"

Howling and screaming, the squaws and boys drew closer round Guy, thrusting their sharpened sticks into his flesh.

He showed no emotion except that his one eye blazed with peculiar fierceness, and his frame trembled with suppressed passion.

Meanwhile he looked around in vain for Winnihah.

What had become of the Indian girl? Was he to die without obtaining another glance at her beautiful features?

One more glance and he was ready to die—to bear his tortures like a martyr!

He was afraid that he would not see her; that the Indians had noticed her sympathy with the prisoner, and fearful that she might interfere, on this occasion, had not permitted her to come.

Finally the chief War-nee-we, an old man of sixty and the father of Winnihah, made a signal for the squaws and maidens to withdraw; after which the rope to pull the prisoners up above the fagots was adjusted to the branch.

As yet the two had not been stripped; now, however, their upper garments were taken off, revealing deep, muscular chests, not inferior in size to those of the largest of the men who surrounded them.

An Indian was about securing the rope to Chick's shoulder, when, suddenly, the old chief's eye lighted up with a peculiar expression; he ran up to the prisoner, examined his flesh closely: then, with one blow, severed the rope!

What was the meaning of this? All eyes were turned upon the old man with an expression of wonder; the squaws, especially, with true feminine curiosity, pressing forward uttering questioning cries!

For several moments the old Indian spoke not a word.

Then his thunder voice rolled upon the air with startling distinctness:

"Stop! IT IS WIHOLA, THE SON OF WAR-NEE-WE! BEHOLD THE MARK!"

So saying, he turned Chick half-way round, disclosing upon his shoulder the red impression of a BENT BOW!

At this there were excited exclamations among the older Indians, who crowded round Chick, peering into his face and glancing alternately from him to the chief.

"Will the old chief tell Chick what mean?" said the boy.

"The son of War-nee-we shall know!" was the answer.

There and then he made the explanation, which was as follows:

Sixteen years before, the camp was surprised by a large party of Crows, who, pouncing upon it, killed and captured a great many warriors, the rest fleeing, that at some future day they might avenge those who had fallen. During the combat, War-nee-we got separated from his squaw, Mineola, who fled fast with her little boy Wihola in her arms.

Several days after, War-nee-we found his squaw lying dead and tomahawked upon the prairie, but was unable to discover any trace of his little boy, who, he therefore concluded, had been carried off by those who had slain his mother, and perhaps by this time, also, put to death. For years War-nee-we looked for a trace of his boy—whom he would know by his birth-mark, the bent bow—but could discover none.

"Thar, yer see," exclaimed Red Claw, "I know more upon that matter, red-skin, than you yerself, since it war me who found yer little boy, a-lyin' among reeds, where he mought never hev been discovered ef I hadn't heard him cry. Findin' him thar, I picked him up, and hev brought him up to the stripling which you war jist a-goin' to torture—*thar's you!*"

"The white man tells the truth," exclaimed Chick to his newly-discovered father. "He has been *very* good to Wihola; he has given him plenty good meat and good clothes to wear; yes, he has been good to me, and his life must not be taken!"

The old chief stood glancing from the boy to the still bound trapper, an undecided look now showing upon his stern features. Finally he retired a few paces and held consultation with his warriors.

For a long time they talked together, but no conclusion could be arrived at, wherefore it was decided to let the tribe's prophet determine whether Guy should be liberated or executed.

After a few minutes' consideration, the prophet made known the suggestion which he stated had been breathed into him by the red-man's friend, the great Manitou.

It was this: that the famed Red Claw should *die*, but not by severe torture; he should be killed at once by a blow on the head from a tomahawk in the hand of Omeeno's mother.

Vainly Chick—or Wihola, as he must now be called—endeavored to dissuade the red-men from their intention. Guy was bound to the tree, and the mother of the slain Indian was about to strike, when Winnihah, who had been absent at the grave of Omceno, planting flowers thereon, according to the custom of her tribe, arriving in the camp and seeing what was about to take place, shouted to the old woman to forbear, at the same time rushing toward her.

The hag, holding her arm suspended on hearing the voice, half turned, when Winnihah, who, by this time, had reached the spot, rushed up and caught her wrist.

Her father advanced to pull her away; but she could not be prevailed upon to let go her hold.

Meanwhile she pleaded earnestly, almost wildly, for the trapper's life, informing her parent how nobly he had saved her from the Crows, etc.

At this the old chief once more turned to the prophet, and said something to him, when the man again retired to hold communion with the Manitou.

In half an hour he again came forth.

"What says Wycochee?" inquired the chief.

"Wycochee has again heard the voice of the Great Spirit in the air, talking to him, and what he says must be good."

The Indians all crowded round the speaker, listening with eager curiosity to what he might say. Winnihah alone remained close to the tree, her expectant face, however, turned eagerly toward the prophet.

Guy also showed intense interest in what might follow; his very life depending upon what the man might take a fancy to say.

"Shall the white man live or die?—which says the prophet?" inquired War-nee-we, while the mother of Omeeno grasped her tomahawk, her eyes blazing like a tiger's.

"The Manitou has said that the white man still must die!" was the solemn answer.

"Run—run for life!" hissed Winnihah in Guy's ears, severing, with a knife she had pulled from her girdle; the bonds that held him to the tree.

The Indians having, as stated, gathered round the prophet, the trapper had an excellent chance to take the girl's advice.

With one bound, he leaped a distance of several feet, and then ran at the top of his speed, making straight for the woods in front of him.

The next moment the Indians discovered the fugitive, and set out in chase.

Away they went, fugitive and pursuers, the trapper running with a fleetness which was more than a match for that exerted by the red-men.

"On—on—on!"

Swift as the wind, Red Claw continued his way.

Several rifles were discharged at him, but the intervention of the trees prevented their taking effect.

For miles the chase was continued, when the trapper having disappeared far ahead, the Indians gave up the pursuit and returned, one by one, to the camp.

Meanwhile Winninah, who had been suspected of having severed the prisoner's bonds, was being severely reprimanded by her father, the old chief, when Wihola interposed.

"Must not speak so to Winnihah—Chick's sister!"

Winnihah looked surprised, when the chief, remembering that he had not yet explained to her the relation between the two, did so at once.

Her feelings may be imagined. Both the young people now could understand the feeling which the presence of each had excited in the other. Arm in arm, they strolled toward the quarters of Ada, who had already heard the good news.

Soon after, the chief again commenced to reprimand Winnihah, who, however, soon checked him by informing him that she *loved* the trapper.

At this unexpected announcement the old chief became even harsh, and threatened to beat his daughter.

For this the high-spirited girl left the camp at night and wandered off in the direction Red Claw had taken.

Subsequently the two met and were united by an old minister, sojourning in those parts.

A week later, Ada and Wihola were also married by the same man.

Several months after, Wihola (Chick), who had returned to the camp of his father, left it forever, the old chief having been slain during a skirmish, in which the horse-thief Pierre was also killed. Having no ties of affection to bind him to the red-men, he gladly acceded to the wishes of his wife, and with Winnihah and Guy, emigrated to a settlement far away to the north-west, where they still live a mile or so from each other, happy and contented.

"Thar's no tellin' how things *will* turn out!" Guy often remarks. "Hyar's me with my one eye, got as purty a wife as kin be found, with three little ones, which, thank Heaven! hev all two eyes and will grow up to be a blessin' to *we—thar's us!*"

Soon after emigrating, as above described, Red Claw received from an old trapper friend—whom he had known when a boy, but who had afterward given up his wild life and entered into business in New Orleans—a letter, bequeathing him a nice little property, consisting of a house and garden in the suburbs of the city.

This was good news indeed, and the trapper at once announced to his wife his intention of starting to take possession. The beautiful Indian wife begged hard to accompany him, but Red Claw resolved to undertake the lengthy journey alone, intending to sell out the property and return home with the money left to him.

Having packed up such articles as he deemed it necessary to carry, and bade adieu to his friends, he set out one beautiful morning, to take the steamer at St. Paul.

On arriving at St. Paul, he found the boat nearly ready to start, and was soon aboard. In a short time the little vessel was steaming down the river at a fast rate.

A man with a slouched hat stood at one end of the boat, apparently watching the shore. He was a tall fellow, of dark complexion, although his face was nearly concealed by the broad rim of his *chapeau*. The trapper paid but little attention to him at first; but when finally he saw the man leave

the side of the boat on which he was standing and walk over to the other rail, something in his gait impressed Guy with the idea that he had seen the person before. While puzzling his brain to remember *where* and *under what circumstances*, recollection suddenly came to his aid. He had seen the man one evening while out hunting, walking arm in arm with Pierre Leman. Yes, he remembered it well now, from the fact that when the two met *him*, they stopped conversing, as if not caring to have an honest man know what they were saying.

Watching the fellow askance, Guy beheld him turn suddenly round, as if he *felt* that one eye. On first meeting it, the stranger frowned, but the next moment a bland smile lighted his face, and crossing to where Red Claw stood, he held out his hand.

"Well met! well met!"

Guy would not take the extended hand.

"I have seen you with Pierre Leman, who was a dishonest man!" he said, frankly—"thar's it!"

"Well, what of that? Do you know what I was trying to do?"

"No."

"Well, then, I will tell you. I had heard that he was a bad, unscrupulous man—a horse-thief—a robber; wherefore, I, being a minister of the gospel, was endeavoring to reform him!"

Guy eyed the speaker keenly.

He had the air of a minister, sure enough, with his white neckcloth and the peculiar bland expression of his countenance.

"I am glad if I was mistaken," said the trapper, "and I hope what you say is true."

"True as gospel."

"Then here's my hand!" cried Red Claw, and the two shook hands heartily.

"And now, which way are you going? As far as New Orleans?"

"Yes, I am going there to get possession of some property and sell it."

"Ah! I am glad that we are both bound in the same direction. I, too, am going to New Orleans. We can be company for each other."

"Yes, we kin, willingly!"

In due time the boat arrived at St. Louis, whence our two travelers took another boat for New Orleans.

While aboard this boat something occurred to puzzle Red Claw.

Peering into the lower cabin one morning, he beheld seated at a table garnished with bottles of whisky and several glasses, a party of six men playing cards, evidently gambling, as there was a big pile of money on the table before them.

Among these gamblers, with back turned toward the intruder, sat his fellow-traveler, seeming to enjoy the game with a gusto equal to that of the rest.

"He is no minister—a mere impostor!" thought Red Claw, and turned away disgusted.

Shortly after, the pretended minister joined Guy on deck.

"See hyar!" exclaimed the trapper, turning sharp upon the other, "I do not wish to hev any more to do with you."

"Why, my friend? What can be the matter?"

"You are no minister; you are a humbug. I saw ye gambling down sta'rs!"

A smile broke over the face of the minister.

"Did you see my face?"

"No."

"Well, then, if you had stepped in and looked at the face you would have seen that the person you took for me was not I, although wearing my hat and coat. I have just got out of bed. As I stepped out, I missed my coat and hat, and a man came in with the garments a moment later, and handed them to me, begging my pardon for the mistake he had made of taking my clothes in the dark, for his own."

The trapper eyed the speaker keenly

"But I heard your voice!"

"There, friend, you must be mistaken. You recognized the hat and coat, and your imagination did the rest!"

"No; but I heard the voice before I looked into the room!"

"Ha! ha! Now, my dear sir, I'll be bound it *was* my voice you heard; for my apartment is separated from the inner room down-stairs, only by a thin partition!"

Guy colored at this, believing that he had really been mistaken.

Finally the boat arrived at New Orleans.

"Were you ever here before?" inquired Mr. Watson; for such was the name the stranger went by aboard the boat.

"No; I never was."

"Then you can hardly be expected to know the location of your property. What street is it in?"

Why did Guy hesitate? He could not have told to save his life. Some nameless feeling seemed urging him not to give his companion the information he asked. Finally, however, he blamed himself for being so suspicious, and with frank fearlessness answered:

"No. —, — street!"

"I will go there with you. It will save you the trouble of looking for a street, which I doubt you would find without much difficulty."

"Thank you," answered Red Claw, now feeling grateful, and entirely losing all mistrust.

They went to the street together, and together entered Guy's new acquisition, in which lived the agent of his deceased friend.

On hearing the trapper's wish to sell, the agent said that he would assist him all he could to dispose of the property to the best advantage. This being agreed upon, Mr. Watson rose to take leave.

"When," he inquired, "do you intend leaving the city for home?"

"As soon as I sell."

"Meanwhile you can find me at No. —, — street."

So saying he bowed, and shaking hands with Guy, left the house.

In the course of ten days, Guy had sold his property for four thousand dollars in gold, and with a glad heart prepared to return home.

The money he sewed in a belt, which he buckled tightly around his waist, resolving at night to put it under his pillow.

He had seen his fellow-passenger twice since they came to New Orleans, and the last time Mr. Watson had stated that he would start for the north in a couple of days.

As Guy, therefore, stepped aboard the steamboat four days after the time Watson had spoken of, he was surprised to meet the latter, the first man, on his reaching the deck.

"Well met!" exclaimed the minister, smiling—"glad to see you!"

"I thought you were to start two days ago," said Guy, as they shook hands.

"So I intended; but unexpected business detained me."

"Thar's it," said the trapper, moralizing, "we kin never know what may turn up!"

"I trust you had good success with your property, friend?"

"I did," answered Red Claw.

As he spoke, he noticed that the eyes of his companion were turned toward the belt round his waist.

"Are you armed?" whispered the minister.

"I have a revolver," answered Guy. "Sorry I left Fire-teeth at home, as somehow he and I hev always been so much together that I kind o' miss his company."

"Ha! ha! Fire-teeth is a rifle, I suppose!"

"Yer kin believe that; a better one were never handled!"

In due time the boat arrived within twenty miles of St. Paul, where it was detained—winter was now approaching—by immense drifts of ice.

There were but four passengers aboard, and these decided to set out to perform the rest of the journey on foot, rather than wait for a passage through the drifts.

Accordingly they started, two going to the westward, and the others—Guy and his companion Watson—proceeding more to the northward.

"We have a long tramp before us, my friend!" said Watson, "and I hope we won't fall in with Indians!"

"No, we won't!" answered Guy—"I am *purty* sure of that!"

They walked briskly and were soon passing over a hillock about five miles from the river shore.

One thing Red Claw now noticed, which was this: that his companion would always fall behind and permit him to take the lead. This, however, seemed natural enough since it was likely that Watson had heard of Guy's great reputation as a guide throughout the wildernesses of the United States, both north and south.

It was about the hour of twilight, when, standing upon an elevated point of land, Red Claw was looking round him for a good place in which to pass the night. As he gazed away from his companion, the latter, suddenly catching him by the back of the neck and placing his knee against him, threw him down! The next moment he had both knees upon the trapper's breast, and his left hand upon his throat, while in his right holding a long knife pulled from a breast-pocket!

"Now then!" he shrieked, "your time has come! Pierre's dying words to me—I was near him when he fell in the skirmish—were to hunt and take the life of him who would lodge information against our band and cause its breaking up and the loss of all our profits!"

"My first thoughts war right then," gasped the trapper—"you are one of Pierre's horse-thieves?"

"Yes, curse you; and now *my* time has come. Your life and your money are in my hands! I have carefully tracked you thus far, and you shall not escape me."

As he spoke he lifted his knife high, to drive it to the hilt in the other's heart. The blade descended but not upon Guy; for the latter, kicking his adversary in the stomach, sent him spinning over his head—the knife lodging in the arm of the would-be assassin.

Then springing to his feet, Red Claw drew his revolver, just in time to catch a glimpse of Watson's figure, retreating through the fast-gathering shadows of twilight. Guy pursued a short distance; but soon losing sight of the robber in the darkness, turned, and resumed his way toward home.

Before moonrise he came upon a white man's hut, in which he obtained lodgings for the night. Next morning he continued his way, and before another night, was clasped to the bosom of his beautiful Indian wife, who listened with bated breath to a recital of his adventure with the robber Watson.

With his money, Red Claw built a fine house and improved his grounds, which will make him comfortable during the remainder of his life.

About two years after, he was present at the hanging of Murrel, the noted burglar, horse-thief, assassin, etc.

As the prisoner was led past him toward the gallows, Guy uttered a cry of astonishment on recognizing in the culprit the

same man who had accompanied him on the Mississippi boat, under the name of Watson and subsequently attempted his life!

"Thar's it!" muttered the trapper. "No wonder that Pierre Leman was so long able to carry on his rascality with such a rascal as that to help him!"

He waited until he saw the man give his last kick; then returned home to his wife and children, banishing the dark picture from his mind forevermore!

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